

## ABSTRACT

### **LIGHTED TO LIGHTEN: A STUDY OF MISSIONAL FAMILIES IN BANGALORE, INDIA**

by

P. C. Mathew Thankachan

This dissertation explores how missional families in the city of Bangalore, India, use their home intentionally to fulfill the missional purpose of God. In the context of India's growing rate of divorce and family suicides, and the increase in religious persecutions of Christians in India, this study explores how Christian families can connect to these needs by using their home as a platform to restore hope and life in Jesus Christ.

The findings of the major motivation of missional families included the influence of their home of origin, spouse, and other model families, their sense of God's call and burden for people to know Christ, their understanding of God, their understanding of home as a sacred place for ministry, their desire to leave a godly legacy to their children, and their desire to be a blessing for others, which allows them to keep themselves available.

The research helped me to understand the need for more missional homes in India and the need to shift focus from the traditional mission assigned to structured churches and professionals to engaging Christian families to fulfill the mission of Christ in this world. Every Christian home is a lighthouse and they are *lighted to lighten*.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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Doctor of Ministry

by

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## CHAPTER 1

### PROBLEM

At four o'clock in the morning, the telephone bell rang in my home. Half asleep with anxious thoughts, I answered the call. It was a call from Shalini (name changed), one of my staff members, who was calling in utter despair and helplessness. She introduced Laxmi (name changed), an old college friend of hers, who needed urgent help. Laxmi had had a conflict with her husband and had walked out of their home. As a result she had spent the whole night in the streets in the cold weather. Laxmi was trying to find her way to my home, and because she could not figure it out, she had called Shalini for directions. Shalini had called to warn me of a strange visitor who would soon be at my door. I was fully awake now. I became curious about this person and her problem. I was also a bit perplexed about Laxmi's choice of my home. I asked Shalini, what made Laxmi choose my home? Shalini then narrated her casual conversation with Laxmi a few days back, when she had mentioned my family to Laxmi and had introduced my home as an open home willing to help families.

When Laxmi left her home in the middle of the night, she could not think of any other place but my home. The verbal fight, which started at the dining table of the young couple, slowly turned into a mini war. When the war became intense and highly physical, Laxmi ran away from home in the middle of the night to the streets of the city, and she wandered all around trying to locate my house. When all her attempts failed, she finally decided to call her friend Shalini, who directed her to my place.

Within minutes, Laxmi was at my front door. When I opened the door, she came in and began to cry and scream. It was quite frightening. I wondered what my neighbors

would think. I was not sure what I needed to do to help her as she was lamenting and crying inconsolably. It was truly a strange experience to have a strange visitor in the early hours of the dawn. Laxmi was vengeful, angry, and upset, and she was looking for a place to pour out her pain and frustration. I noticed she still had her office name tag hanging on her neck. The tag helped me to identify that she worked in a good computer firm. Her husband too worked in a reputed firm. Both of them earned salaries ten times that of an average Indian family. They had been married for just over a year. They were not Christians. I decided to meet her husband before he called the police about his missing wife. Laxmi gave me direction to her home. I waited for the sun to rise, and at six in the morning, I went to meet her husband.

The scene I witnessed shocked me. The home looked devastated with every article in that home broken and torn down. Looking around I could imagine the kind of fight they had had. I introduced myself to Laxmi's husband, Ravi, who though suspicious invited me, but later was relieved to know that his wife was safe. Ravi was thankful for the information and said he would meet me in couple of hours at my home. He promptly came to my home. Along with my wife, I spent time listening to Laxmi and Ravi as they narrated their story and their issues. We were able to help them sort out their problems over a period of time.

What intrigued me about the incident was Laxmi's choice to come to my home in the middle of the night. My staff member only casually mentioned it, and my home became her place of refuge. When Laxmi needed help, she was not looking for a professional counselor or a law enforcement officer, but she was looking for a home where she could confide. Culturally, Indians prefer not to share their personal family

issues with anyone outside their own close family. They usually cover up these issues and would not like them to be known by others. For neighbors and outsiders to know about one's family problems is considered a shameful thing. However, they do not mind sharing with their close friends who share a close relationship with the family. People seek professional counseling as a last resort in most cases because of the taboo in approaching a professional counselor. Many see getting professional help as an unfortunate situation. Most counseling sessions are done by peers or close family members. However, such peer counseling also has a negative effect when those seeking help receive wrong counseling and advice from their peers. Christian families have a great opportunity to minister if they develop and foster strong relationships with their neighbors and community.

Unfortunately, marriage breakdowns like that of Laxmi and Ravi's are increasing in urban India. On a regular basis, Indian newspapers, magazines, and television channels carry news reports and articles on issues such as family conflicts, divorce, domestic violence, and dowry deaths. These issues only surface after the damage becomes deep and after the disaster has occurred. Because families and couples do not find the needed help at the right time, they end up dealing with their issues in their own way—often creating more damage to themselves and the community. People have a desperate need for open homes and individuals who are willing to make a difference in the lives of others. When people know that one is available to help families and individuals, they will never lack strangers like Laxmi and Ravi. I believe Christians who have experienced God's grace in abounding measure through the Cross have a call to make their homes mission centers. I like to refer such homes as *missional homes* or *lighthouses*. Just as



lighthouses navigate the ships to the shore in darkness, families with deep commitment to Christ, the true light of the world, are the lighthouses for families in crisis. Jesus urged his disciples to be the light of their own city, by first lighting their own homes with the light of Christ (Matt. 5:14-15). Laxmi and Ravi went through a process of counseling and attended the weekend family conference of Urban India Ministries, which helped them restore their relationship. In the process of helping them, my wife and I also shared the gospel of Jesus Christ. If every Christian home becomes intentional about their mission to the world, many like Laxmi and Ravi can be helped in their crisis and would be led to the true light—Jesus Christ.

### **Urbanization—A Major Cause for Family Breakdown**

*Family* is a big buzzword now in India, not because of the increase in happy families but because of the large number of marriage breakdowns that have occurred in the last decade. The sudden steep increase in divorce rates in all major cities bears witness to the deterioration of families. *Times of India*, a widely circulated newspaper in India, reported a steep rise in the rate of divorce in Mumbai (47.5 percent) in the last six years (2002-2008). The report also says, “For every five weddings registered in Mumbai since 2002, family courts have received two applications for divorce” (Viju). Nirmala Govindarajan quotes a recent research study showing that the majority of the breakups in marriage in the city of Bangalore happen among people working in the information technology (IT) sector (4). One of the reasons she quotes for breakups is the clash between a new work culture and the traditional notion of marriage. In the traditional notion of Indian marriage, the man was the sole bread winner, and the woman took care of the home. Now, both men and women work long hours outside of home, but the same

traditional notion of women taking care of all the domestic affairs and serving their husbands largely prevails.

The state of Kerala, which has a significant Christian population, reports a quantum leap of 350 percent in the rate of divorce in the last decade (“Doing It Apart”).

Urbanization is contributing to the stress and strain on Indian marriages and families. With more multinational corporate giants moving into India, the economic growth in the last decade is phenomenal. India is becoming a land of opportunities. Statistics affirm that India is among the youngest nations in the whole world. The cover story of a weekly magazine in India called *Outlook India* highlighted that 54 percent of the Indian population is under the age of 25 (“The Zippies Are Here”). With a population of 1.2 billion, the major corporate giants depend on the huge workforce in India. With the IT boom in the last decade, many IT companies have made their presence known in India. Yatish Rajawat notes that Accenture, a multinational computer firm, employs close to fifteen thousand people in India, the largest number outside the United States. India also accounts for over 10 percent of Accenture’s total workforce. Rajawat also notes that smaller multinational firms have more than 50 percent of their workforce in India, where companies are not only dependent on India for delivery of services, but their growth is dependent on their capabilities in India. Urban India is working twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Many of the companies in India are serving the whole world through their technology and call centers. Increased salary and coveted titles have suddenly made Indians gain an identity in the world market.

This growth has resulted in sudden economic and social change, which has resulted in unexpected negative side effects for urban Indians. I believe most of the

changes caused by industrialization and urbanization has an affect on family. Charles M. Sell shows how around the world with few exceptions, wherever industrialization and urbanization increase so do divorce (52). Increases in divorce in all the metropolitan areas of India indicate a growing decline in family relationships. In Urban India, 70 percent of the divorce seekers are between the ages of 25 and 35. The data collected at the Urban India Ministries helpline in Bangalore supports this finding, where 80 percent of the calls are from couples in the same age group. Most of them seek divorce in the first five years of marriage.

In an interesting, well-researched article, Thara Mohan Rao examines the various reasons for the growing number of divorces in India. She blames the increase on the era of instant gratification. She says, “People marry in haste and walk out of it in post haste as well” (Rao). Some of the reasons Rao highlights are the rise of education both by men and women, economic independence, growing individualism, extramarital affairs, violence, cruelty, undesirable influence of external forces that have affected values, lack of role models, etc. In the editorial article in the *Times*, “Doing It Apart,” the editor says, “The most cited reasons by those filing for divorce are incompatibility and adultery and a substantiate number of them are youngsters.” The report also mentions that a combination of factors—nuclear family structure, professional ambitions, mismatched expectations, and modern lifestyles—as contributing to the increase in the number of couples that decide to go their own ways. The article also points to the change of attitude of the youth today regarding marriage. They do not subscribe to rigid notions of the sanctity of marriage as an institution. If things do not work out, they are willing to think of life beyond the bond.

Young, ambitious men and women seem to have married their career instead of their spouses. For example, many families emphasize economic criteria and earning power as the reason for their choice of a life partner. Career, title, and salary often become the criteria by which many in urban Indians choose their marriage partners. Furthermore, the pace of work-life in urban India leaves little time for nurturing a healthy, intimate marriage. An average software professional spends thirteen or fourteen hours a day at his or her office. They also fill their weekends with many official functions, leaving little room for personal activities.

Unfortunately, the church also has seen an equal rise in divorce in the cities. Johny Pazanilath quotes the statistics of the family court in the Indian state called Kerala. He reports that in the family court of Cochin, a well-known city in the state of Kerala, close to 50 percent of the divorce petitions filed are from Christians.

The National Crime Records Bureau of India cites “Family problem” as one of the main reason for the increase in the rate of suicides in India. Mental illness and depression are the usual reasons quoted for suicides in most countries (Iype). Suicide is another huge wave that has hit the urban Indian family. India accounts for 10 percent of the total suicides in the whole world. South India is the suicide capital of the world. Bangalore ranks first as a city in the number of suicides. Most of these suicides surprisingly are due to nonmental disorders such as financial constraints, stress, and personal relationships. A good number of the victims are software professionals and urban teens. With great dreams of making their children superheroes in their academics and other extracurricular activities, parents in urban areas push children beyond their limits. The aggressive behavior of parents and lack of parental presence has contributed

much to the number of teen suicides in the country. Most suicides among teens in cities happen during examination time in schools. George Iype quotes psychologist Mathew Kurien of the Southern Medical Centre from Bangalore about the pressure the children face from their parents:

In this modern age, children are not brought up peacefully. They are under pressure to deliver at school; they are under pressure to appear for competitive examinations. After they reach puberty, no one in the family gives them any advice about the meaning of life.

Hence, the family plays a major role in teen suicides in urban Indian families.

With the taboo of approaching a professional helper still existing in India, marital conflicts and problems are on the increase without a vent to release their frustration. Dr. Tony Sam George, a well-known family counselor and marriage therapist in the city of Bangalore, told me that he believes most marriage and family conflicts can find solutions if people seek help early. He also added, “Since taking help on emotional issues is often viewed by our culture as ‘shame’ or ‘a let down on family status,’ the intervention by professionals comes often as the last resort. Most end up suffering without taking any help.” Dr. Rudran expresses the same sentiment in the article by Rao. However, if a close neighbor offers help or a friend, people are willing to listen and take the help offered. Many couples in their desperate need for help do seek help outside their familiar circles, but with much caution in order to maintain confidentiality and anonymity. When the organization that I serve and lead, called Urban India Ministries (UIM), started a counseling hotline in 2007, a small news snippet with the hotline number in the newspaper attracted as many as thirty calls on the first day of its inauguration. Because the counselees could maintain anonymity, they were bold enough to call. The strong

response indicates the intensity of the problem and demonstrates how families are constantly looking for help.

Another useful observation is that, when people decide to get help, they do not care where their help comes from. The newspaper carrying the news of the UIM hotline mentioned UIM as a Christian ministry, but people from all faiths called in, knowing its Christian identity. The majority of those who called were from non-Christian faiths. From my personal experience in ministry, in almost all cases I have counseled, I have revealed my identity as a Christian counselor, and I have prayed with my counselees with their permission. I have done it irrespective of their faith background. In the last six years, I cannot recollect a single counselee who opposed me or who walked out of the counseling session because of my faith or because of my offer to pray. In most cases, they were more than delighted to be prayed for and many have sought prayers voluntarily. In many instances, in the context of having built the relationship, I could also share my faith in Jesus Christ and lead a few to Christ.

Given this urban reality of India, Christian families have a great opportunity to model and display wholesome family life based on biblical principles, which in itself becomes an attractive tool to connect with other families. Christian families in urban India are getting more and more secluded and isolated in their own ghettos of Bible study groups, fellowship meetings, etc. With individualistic culture beginning to dominate in urban cities, Christian families are also losing a sense of missional responsibility to their neighbors and friends. When UIM conducted a family enrichment program targeting non-Christians, every Christian family had to bring a neighbor or friend from another faith. To my surprise, many expressed that they do not have friends from other religions. Jesus'

call to be the light of the world is a call to shine in darkness. Many families have many unmet needs. Some are spoken, while others are unspoken. When Christian families are able to build relationships intentionally with their neighbors and friends irrespective of faith, they can address many of their unspoken and spoken felt needs. The relationship becomes an opportunity for others to see the light of Jesus shining through Christian families. It initiates people to further explore the reason behind the strength of a Christian family. In the process, they would see the light of Christ, and some would be attracted to follow Christ. As the Scripture reminds Christians in Matthew 5:16, “In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (NIV). When Christians shine the light of Christ to the World, it will make the Father known and will bring praise to Him.

Indian families prefer an insider to an outsider when dealing with family issues. Thus, the only way to understand the issues of the people is by becoming an insider. If the Christian family is only at the giving end and does not engage itself adequately to also receive help from their neighbors, then the chances of becoming an insider are limited. When Christian families begin to relate and build relationships with their non-Christian neighbors, they would begin to contribute to the needs of the Christian families too. This position of being willing to receive help makes relationships more joyful and it paves way for more healthy and open interaction. Hurting families are looking for answers in close circles of friendship rather than from a professional counselor or a psychologist.<sup>1</sup> They need a shoulder on which to cry, a friend in which to confide, and a family to which to belong.

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<sup>1</sup> Professional counselors and psychologists can be and are helpful to people, but Indians do not usually seek help from these professional avenues.

Indian cities or urban centers of India are multicultural, multireligious, and multilingual. With growing resistance and hostility to the gospel in society, I cannot think of a better alternative to make the presence of Christ known in the cities of India than being a *lighthouse* or missional family to bring hope and light to the hopeless and hurting families. Sadly, many Christian families do not respond to the dire need of the community, though they are aware of their call to be the light and salt of the earth. Most of them seem to be happy in their own closed circles and cozy fellowships. More and more Christians are becoming a secluded community and have left the work of evangelism to the professionals in mission. Therefore, it is good to know what prevents the Christian families from reaching out to their neighbors. The challenges they face as well as their fears, need to be understood. Some may be feeling ill equipped, or they themselves may be seeking for help. The growing hostility toward Christians in India could have instilled fear in Christian families and could have restricted their involvement in the community. The study of missional families in this research may throw light onto some of these questions.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this research was to explore the motivation, strategies, and challenges that missional families face in the city of Bangalore, India.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions will guide this research study.

#### **Research Question #1**

What motivated the participants to be missional families?



## **Research Question #2**

What specific strategies do these missional families adopt to fulfill their missional purpose in order to affect their neighborhood, and what are its effects?

## **Research Question #3**

What challenges have Christian families experienced or what fears do they have related to being missional families?

## **Definition of Terms**

The definitions for the key terms in this research are missional family, missional home/ couples / house and lighthouse families.

### **Missional Family:**

The term *missional family* is a borrowed term from the definition of a missional church. Rick Meigs offers an etymology of the word *missional*. By definition he says the term is “relating to or connected with a religious mission.” *Missional* is from the word *missionalism*, which is a noun meaning “missionary work or activity.” He attributes the first usage of the word in the modern usage to Francis DuBose in his book, *God Who Sends*. DuBose was the first missiologist to use the term *missional* in its modern understanding. By the 1990s the term began to appear more and more in the works of Lesslie Newbigin and in the books of Guder such as *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America (friend of missional)*. Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch understand *missional* as outward looking, always changing to fit into the culture (incarnational), and always faithful to the Word of God (7). From the variety of input I have received about the word *missional*, I would define a *missional family* as a family who has built a strong relationship with Jesus Christ both as individuals and as a family,

where the family understands the greater purpose of family life, which primarily calls for building strong family relationships within one's own home and also reaching out to others in need by sacrificially living for God and his mission, thus adopting a missionary stance in relation to one's own culture, in order to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ in this world. Based on this definition, five characteristics of a missional family emerge. They are a (1) worshipping family, (2) loving family, (3) incarnational family, (4) attractional family, and (5) nurturing family. I used these five characteristics to select and evaluate the participants for the research.

### **Missional Family/Home/Couple:**

I have used *Missional family*, *missional home*, and *missional couple* interchangeably in this dissertation. All three refer to a missional family who has the characteristics in the definition above; however, for this research I have limited the participants to the adult members of the family.

### **Missional house:**

The term *missional house* refers to the house in which the missional family is staying. It refers to the place the family uses to reach their neighborhood. It is also the place of meeting for their family, friends, and neighbors during different occasions. A home is open for others to come and feel the warmth of the hospitality offered by the missional family.

### **Lighthouse families:**

The theme of one of the three-module camps of Urban India Ministries (UIM) is lighthouse families where the emphasis is on "being a missional family." The participants of the camp go through an orientation where the participants learn the need and

importance of being a missional family. The purpose of this three-module camp is to equip Christian families to serve as a beacon of hope to others who need help and to attract people to the gospel by the light that lighthouse families give to their surrounding and neighborhood. The module also trains the lighthouse families in basic skills related to counseling such as empathetic listening, etc. The camp emphasizes the need to be available to one's own family, friends, and relatives and to society. The camp encourages families to draw their light from the resource of true light, Jesus Christ.

The people who attended the three-module conference went through two other conferences, where module 1 is focused on building the relationship between the couple and module 2 is focused on family issues such as parenting, issues that families face with regard to extended families, money, health, etc. I have used *lighthouse couples* as another word for missional families.

### **Context of the Study**

I have limited the context of this research to urban India and specifically the city that I operate from called Bangalore.

#### **Bangalore—A Fast Growing City in India**

This research focuses on the families living in Bangalore. Bangalore (officially Bengaluru) is the capital of the Indian state of Karnataka. Located in the southeastern part of Karnataka, Bangalore has an estimated metropolitan population of 6.5 million, making it India's third most populous city and fifth largest metropolitan area. During the British rule, Bangalore developed as a center for colonial rule in South India. The establishment of the Bangalore cantonment brought in a large numbers of migrants from other parts of the country.

Bangalore is home to numerous public sector heavy industries, software companies, aerospace, telecommunications, machine tools, heavy equipment, and defense establishments. Bangalore has developed into one of India's major economic hubs and is rated by the leading global media giant CNN-Time Warner group in their business magazine 2.0, as one of the "Best places to do business in the wired world" (Business 2.0 Staff).

Bangalore, known as the garden city or the pensioner's paradise, was the destination for retired people with its moderate climate and ideal setting in which to relax. In the last two decade, the growth of its information technology sector has brought in all the leading computer giants and other consumer market giants into the city. Bangalore is known as the Silicon Valley of India because it is teeming with computer professionals from all across the country and abroad. It holds a preeminent position as the leading contributor to India's information technology industry.

As a large and growing metropolis in the developing world, Bangalore struggles with problems such as air pollution, traffic congestion, and crime. The city's population has almost doubled in the last twenty years with land prices shooting up and with more migrants from other states moving into the city. This city is no longer the cool pensioner's paradise. Instead it is a city teaming with life and energy, with many young people working round the clock. The city now works 24/7 and serves as the hub for international call centers with many young people working through the night. The people who work in call centers have formed a community of their own. Their social interactions with people who work during the day have reached a bare minimum or have almost ceased entirely. In this context, one can imagine married couples where one works during

the day and the other at night. Such work schedules have caused a natural distance and also has given rise to new unhealthy relationships outside of one's own marriage.

Home to some of the well-recognized colleges and research institutions in India, the city has the second-highest literacy rate among the metropolitan cities in the nation. The city attracts students from all over India, and they contribute to the youthfulness of the city; however, the city's divorce rates have shot up considerably, teen suicides have trebled in the last two decades, and it is also the pub capital of India. The uniqueness of the city is its cosmopolitan nature, where the people who have come from other states of India outnumber the native residents of the state. Bangalore rates as the fifth costliest city in the world, which also makes the life of a common person miserable.

### **Changing Political Scene**

Politically it is the first state in South India that democratically elected a Hindu fundamentalist party called the Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) to rule the state of Karnataka. Their ideology is called *Hindutva*, and they believe India is for Hindus. Their cultural and militant wing is the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), and the Bajrang Dal is behind most of the attacks and persecutions of Christians in recent times. The state of Karnataka faced for the first time the worst persecution of Christians in the recent past. Hindu fundamentalist ransacked churches and brutally attacked.

This changing reality of Bangalore, with new restrictions on Christian work and evangelism, along with the moral and ethical degradation of the city brings a unique challenge to evangelism. The influence of the church is not significant when compared to the need. I believe Christian families can play a vital role as the salt and light of the city.

Bangalore ironically serves as the headquarters for most mission organizations in India, but sadly little work worth mentioning is done beyond the walls of the church.

### **Methodology**

The research design is qualitative research using the “in-depth phenomenological interview” method (Seidman 9). It is an in-depth three-interview method. The interviewing method requires conceptualization, establishing access and making contact with participants, interviewing them, transcribing the data, and working with the material (6). Because this research is exploratory in nature and cannot be reduced to numbers and quantities, I have chosen this design to research my subject. Qualitative design views phenomena holistically and so does not attempt to reduce complex phenomena to a few factors or into independent parts. It allows the researcher to operate in a natural setting because of the concern for context and, to the extent possible, to maintain openness about what the researcher observes. It results in flexibility in design and even the possibility of an evolving design as the research proceeds. In qualitative research, the perception of those studied is important. The researcher has to capture the perception in order to obtain an accurate measure of reality. The participants in this study are the one who need to perceive or experience the meaning, and I cannot impose the meaning as the researcher. In qualitative research, assumptions and conclusions are subject to change as the research proceeds.

### **Participants**

From twenty-four names suggested by six Christian leaders in Bangalore city, I chose seven couples by a purposeful sampling method. I invited these couples to participate in an in-depth phenomenological interview explained below. I placed the

couples selected in two major categories based on their years of marriage. I selected senior couples who were married for more than fifteen years and young couples married for less than fifteen years. All the seven couples selected were living in the city of Bangalore for a minimum three years. The couples selected were of Indian origin, as foreign couples would have their own challenges requiring separate research. The couples also were a good mix of both partners working outside of home and just one of them working outside of home. Involving couples working outside of home and inside could throw more light onto some of the challenges and opportunities both categories of couple face.

### **Instrumentation**

In qualitative analysis the researcher is the main instrument. A researcher-designed interview protocol evaluates participants' perceptions of being a missional family based on the definition of missional families outlined above. The interview also explored the opportunities, challenges, and barriers for families to be missional families. The researcher's own background always brings some bias and thoughts into the research. It requires the researcher to be open-minded and absolutely careful in not allowing the researcher's own thoughts and bias to influence the research. Being a missional family in the same context of Bangalore where the research is conducted, I also have my own perception of the challenges, barriers, and opportunities to be a missional home. I took special care that my own perceptions and experiences did not interfere with data collection and analysis. Pilot interviews served as a precaution to check and evaluate my own biases.

**Data Collection**

I used two methods to collect qualitative data: participant observation and a researcher designed in-depth three-interview protocol. As in qualitative research, I was the participant observer in data collection, maintaining field notes where I recorded my thoughts, feelings, and observations. I maintained openness about what I observed and collected in order to avoid missing something important for the research. I personally conducted three extensive in-depth phenomenological interviews of close to ninety minutes per interview with the seven families selected. I recorded the in-depth interview via the Dictaphone and then used for analysis by transcribing the entire interview in Microsoft Word format in the computer. I stored the interview as a wave file in the computer and then transcribed and used it for analysis. I conducted the three interviews with a minimum of three days between each interview. The first interview established the content of the participant's experience. The second allowed the participants to reconstruct the details of their experience within the context in which it occurs. The third encouraged the participants to reflect on the meaning their experience held for them (Seidman 11). As the data record of a qualitative research study can become quite massive with the interview and observation protocol, I also kept a written account of my own thoughts on the data collected. I set up an expert committee from the fields of mission, family therapy, and psychology to assess the validity of the instrument used.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis in qualitative research is a process of categorization, description, and synthesis. I hired a person to transcribe the entire interview in Microsoft Word format including nonverbal sounds such as coughs, sighs, pauses, telephone rings, etc.



Because qualitative analysis produces large quantities of descriptive information from interview and notes, I organized these data by coding them into categories. I did the analysis of the interview by first developing profiles of individual participants and grouping them in categories that made sense. To assist me in data analysis, I took assistance from two of my friends who are involved in the ministry of reaching families. They assisted me in picking up patterns, categories, hidden feelings, behavioral patterns, etc.

### **Delimitation and Generalizability**

I limited this study to Indian participants who are staying in the city of Bangalore and whose home has missional characteristics as defined above. I have only taken families who also display good Christian character and love within their own homes. I did not select families who were reaching out to other families in need with excellent strategies, but have failed in their witness at their own home. I excluded such families from the scope of this study. Though this study could help other cities of India, it is limited to Bangalore and may not be directly applicable to rural India. This study is generalizable in at least three ways: (1) Major cities in India have similar characteristics, and so what is applicable to Bangalore is applicable to other major cities with similar demography; (2) the new urban reality and the restriction of the gospel in cities is a phenomenon in all Indian cities, and the use of Christian homes to connect to people's felt needs is applicable to other cities as well; and, (3) the characteristics of a missional home are biblical mandates for families, and they can be applied to any context, unless restricted by law.

### **Theological Foundation**

The missional family is a reflection of the missional family of the Godhead. Family began with Adam and Eve. Though they were the first human family, one should not ignore the fact that they were a reflection of the family of God. In Genesis 1:26-28 the Trinitarian God in harmony and in unity created man and woman in his image. When God said, “Let us create humankind,” the Trinitarian God was united, and the oneness of the Godhead is reflected in the creation agenda. Though the Godhead had clear functional roles, their unity is a model for any family wanting to live in God’s purpose. They were united in their mission to create humanity and also in the mission of redeeming humankind. The Son subjected himself to the Father, and the Spirit strengthened the Son to accomplish their task together. Stephen Seamands explains the four characteristics of Trinitarian relationships (48), which helps one to understand the dynamics of the relationship that existed in the first missional family. The four characteristics are full equality, glad submission, mutual deference, and joyful intimacy. I discuss the details of the four characteristics that make the Trinitarian relationship an inseparable one in Chapter 2.

God made human beings in his image as *male* and *female*. As they, both reflect the image of God, both maleness and femaleness represent God in his wholeness. Human beings made in the image of God are to reflect the joyful intimacy and relationship that exists in the Trinity. The relationship that existed between Adam and Eve was to reflect the love that exists among the Godhead. Only in Eve could Adam find the suitable companion for his life, although God already existed as a companion for Adam. In Eve, Adam found true meaning for his human identity by which he exclaims in Gen 2:23,

“This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman.’” God filled Adams loneliness by the suitable companion that he had prepared. Hence, God met the need for relational wholeness when he instituted the first family (Seamands 40).

Adam and Eve’s intimacy before the fall reflected the purity of love (with no external coverings) that exists among the Trinity as “the man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame” (Gen. 2:25). God’s desire to multiply the joyful experience that they enjoy among the Godheads could have been the reason for even creating human beings in his image. God created human beings and gave them the beautiful world he created for them and asked them to subdue and rule over it. He wanted his purpose for the world fulfilled through human beings. Even after the fall of human beings, he continued to fulfill his divine purposes for this world by choosing families willing to be his instruments to accomplish his plans.

Throughout the Bible, I have noticed God accomplishing his purpose through various families. The family of Noah, then the Patriarchs, and then his choice of the family of David to reign over Israel, all bear witness to the salvation plan of God through families. His desire is that all families of the earth will be blessed (Gen. 12:3).

A number of examples in the gospels and Acts on how the household plays an important role to the spread of Christianity emphasize the need to use Christian homes for mission. Jesus’ use of homes in his mission and the use of homes by his disciples and the early Church show the significant position homes had in early evangelization. Roger W. Gehring, who researched house churches and mission, concludes, “Jesus’ missional approach consisted of finding a house and a household willing to commit themselves for kingdom message” (46).

The most prominent couple who used their home effectively in the New Testament for missional outreach is the family of Aquila and Priscilla. They established house churches using their own home in three different locations of the Pauline mission: Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. Their hospitality to Paul and other evangelists, their willingness to use their profession to connect with others (Acts 18:3), and their ability to start house churches in all the locations they moved are outstanding missional characteristics of this couple.

The home of Cornelius in Acts 10 in particular is also significant. Even before he became a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, the proactive work of God was operational in Cornelius's home. The influence of his home even caused Peter to change his mind, so that he exclaimed in Acts 10:34-35, "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism, but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right." I see Cornelius's family influencing the various strata of the society starting from his home. Cornelius's faith was not just an individual experience, but rather it was contagious to his entire household. That his entire household was God-fearing shows how he was responsible for them (10:2). "He and all his family" qualifies the entire household, which includes not just the immediate family but also servants, slaves, freedmen, laborers, and sometime even business associates and tenants. As a centurion in an important port city, time would have been a big constraint for him as for any influential person. In spite of his busy schedule, his influence moves to various levels starting at his own home, reflecting Acts 1:8 ("be my witness in Jerusalem [his own home], and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth").

## Overview

Chapter 2 reviews literature associated with the use of homes in the early Church for evangelization, explores the meaning of the term *missional*, and examines research on studies that use homes to reach neighborhoods in India or any other countries. I have also highlighted the theology of “household” in the New Testament and its significance for missional families. I have examined the changing patterns of families in the new urban Indian reality with growing rates of divorce and family conflicts, the growing hostility toward Christian mission in India, and Bangalore city’s socioreligious context to give more light into the challenges faced by the missional families in the city.

Chapter 3 includes discussions and explanations of research methodology, explanation of the research questions, design of the study, interview methods, data collection, and analysis.

Chapter 4 details the findings of the study, and Chapter 5 provides a summary of the conclusion derived from the interpretation of the data as well as the practical application of the conclusions and further study possibilities.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE**

The purpose of Chapter 2 is, firstly, to provide a comprehensive and up-to-date review on the topic of my study—missional families. Secondly, I explore the biblical and theological framework of missional families in a detailed manner and I have suggested five characteristics of a missional family. I have also documented the role of prominent missional families from both the Old and New Testament to establish the need for missional homes today. Thirdly, I examine the context of my study wherein I have carefully looked at the present changing patterns of Indian families caused by changes in socioeconomic conditions resulting in devastating effects on family life and society. I also touch upon the religious and political climate of Bangalore city in order to explain the hostile environment in the city presently for the gospel. Fifthly, I briefly explain the methodology that helped achieve the purpose this research.

#### **Mission and Family**

Michael Green writes that one of the most important methods of spreading the gospel in antiquity was the use of homes (207). Homes as the fundamental unit of society in any culture exert a tremendous influence on their neighbors if the members of the household intentionally connect with their neighbors. Wolfgang Simson, a researcher and journalist, writes with great passion and conviction on the use of homes to bring people to Christ (xiii). He is a strong proponent of house church movements as opposed to institutionalized churches. Though his book directly focuses on Church growth through house churches, its emphasis on each Christian home taking on the onus of reaching their

neighborhood is a point worth noting. He says that the redeemed cannot have a purely private and individualistic lifestyle:

The house church is a way of living the Christian life communally in ordinary homes through supernatural power. It is the way redeemed people live locally. It is the organic way disciples follow Jesus together in everyday life. Since the redeemed no longer belong to themselves, they adopt a mainly communal, rather than purely private and individualistic life style. House churches emerge when truly converted people stop living their own lives for their own ends, start living a community life according to the values of the kingdom of God, and start to share their life and resources with those Christians and not-yet Christians around themselves. (79)

Simson drives home the idea of a clear missiological intention connected to every Christian family. Any family that has taken their commitment to Christ seriously would see *mission* as a mandate of their home. As the word *mission* means *sending*, a family that lives with the consciousness of being sent into the world will display characteristics of Christ and will be engaged in their own context with people outside their home.

Mission started for the disciples in Jerusalem, then Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth. Hence, the mission through one's home starts with one's witness within one's own family and then moves to families outside of the home.

### **Missional Families**

In the last two decades the word *missional* has come to be used extensively by theologians and missiologists in understanding the mission of the Church in the world. Prompted by Bishop Newbigin's short monograph, "The Other Side of 1984: Question for the Churches," Christian thinkers began to reorient their ecclesiocentric understanding of mission to a profoundly theocentric understanding of Christian mission. Theocentric mission theology recovered the Trinitarian character of mission emphasizing that the missionary practice needs to find its ground in the person and work of Christ. Newbigin

in his book on *Trinitarian Faith and Today's Mission* said missionary practice should be seeded by “[t]rust in the reality and power of the Holy Spirit” (77). It should be rooted in practical faith that discerns “God’s fatherly rule in the events of secular history ... in revolutionary changes that are everywhere taking place in the life of the World” (77). Guder observes that mission, especially Western churches, perceive as one of the wings or programs of the Church (5). However, that has begun to change, and he says, “With more work done in the last century from this reconceptualized idea of Christian mission, mission is no more seen just as an activity of the Church” (5). Mission then, is the result of God’s initiation rooted in God’s purpose to restore and heal creation. This rethinking in mission from the perspective of the *missio Dei*, or the mission of God, has helped the body of Christ to understand mission beyond the limitation of ecclesiology. To reach human beings is the mission of God, and in his sovereignty, he accomplishes his work in his way. God uses individuals, families, strangers, or anyone to establish his kingdom. He makes himself known even by direct revelation. In many ways unknown to human beings, he makes his kingdom come. Stories from the Middle East where churches are banned or operate with much restriction and stories from remote parts of India and other Eastern countries continue to startle missiologist and theologians. The mission of God is rooted in the nature of God and is not rooted primarily in the doctrine of the Church.

This newer understanding has been posing challenges among the missiologists and theologians in even defining *Church*. Guder and his team from various denominational backgrounds, after much thinking and deliberation, defined *Church* broadly as “God’s instrument for God’s mission” (8). Frost and Hirsch mention the twelve hallmarks of a missional church proposed by the Gospel and Our Culture Network



(GOCN; 11). The twelfth hallmark reads, “There is recognition that the church itself is an incomplete expression of the reign of God” (12).

With this new understanding of Church from a missional perspective, I propose calling a Christian family that is fulfilling the mission of God inspired by the Great Commission of Jesus Christ a missional family. The household of God (the Church) is a larger household of many Christian households and often, a missional church is a coming together of many missional families. Other than the collective mission of the body of Christ, each individual family also needs to fulfill the mission of God. In responding to the deterioration of family values in America, Bill Bright, the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, said, “Family is Gods smallest battle formation in the Great Commission army” (Robert 333). Missional families are looking beyond their own home and are willing to adapt to their cultural context. Frost and Hirsch describe a missional church as a church that would always ask itself, “What has God called us to be and do in our current cultural context?” (7). They believe the missional church is outward looking, always changing to fit into the culture (incarnational), always faithful to the Word of God (7). GOCN’s twelve hallmarks of missional church to which Frost and Hirsch refer have a great deal to contribute to my understanding of the missional family:

1. The missional church proclaims the gospel.
2. The missional church is a community where all members are involved in learning to become disciples of Jesus.
3. The Bible is normative in this church’s life.
4. The church understands itself as different from the world because of its participation in the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord.

5. The church seeks to discern God's specific missional vocation for the entire community and for all its members.

6. A missional community is indicated by how Christians behave toward one another.

7. It is a community that practices reconciliation.

8. People within the community hold themselves accountable to one another in love.

9. The church practices hospitality.

10. Worship is the central act by which the community celebrates with joy and thanksgiving both God's presence and God's promised future.

11. This community has a vital public witness.

12. The members recognize that the church itself is an incomplete expression of the reign of God (Frost and Hirisch 11-12).

Craig Van Gelder develops further the aspect of a missional church and highlights an important aspect of being led by the Spirit of God. He highlights a misunderstanding that has developed in the understanding of a missional church. As the same misunderstanding can replicate itself in the understanding of missional family, I would like to highlight Van Gelder's position. Some seem to use *missional* to reclaim, yet one more time, the priority of missions in regard to the Church's various activities:

The misunderstanding continues the effort to define a congregation primarily to what it *does* [original emphasis]. It seeks to focus the conversation about what the Church does rather than what the Church is—that is a community created by the Spirit and that it has a unique nature, or essence, which gives it a unique identity. In the light of Church's nature, the missional nature then explores what the church does. (17)

Similarly a missional family is not only about what it *does*, but it is primarily about what the family *is*. What it does comes out from a deep intimate relationship that the family has with God and within themselves. A missional family will love each other as the love that exists within the family of the Godhead. Their love for others will be an overflow of the love they have for God and for their own families.

### **Incarnational and Attractional Missional Families**

Missional families are both incarnational and attractional. The missional family is incarnational because they do not detach from the reality of their community but are intrinsically connected to the needs of their own community and context. As Frost and Hirsch describe incarnational, “it seeps into the cracks and crevices of a society in order to be Christ to those who don’t yet know him” (12). Missional families are also attractional because they live out a Christlike lifestyle, which is noticed by others and draws others to them. I have not used the term *attractional* here in the way the term finds its use as in the context of understanding an attractional church. Frost and Hirsch make a clear distinction between incarnational and attractional churches. They see incarnational churches as opposed to attractional churches. The attractional church as they see does everything possible within the church to get more people flocking to the church, often ignoring their commitment to the community. They understand such Church as come-to-us stance rather than a go-to-them mentality (19). Missional families would shine out the light of Christ attracting others like a lighthouse and would be actively engaged in the community within their own context as the presence of God to the community.

An interesting article by Bo Prosser describes missional families as “being the presence of Christ” in the community. The missional model is about empowering one

another to use one's passions with intentionality to be the presence of Christ to others (Prosser 1). Prosser highlights the choices missional families should make in order to be intentional in becoming the presence of God to the community.

### **Five Characteristics of a Missional Family**

To understand missional families and their unique characteristics, I would like to propose five characteristics of a missional family that serve as the benchmark to evaluate missional families for this research. Missional families are worshiping families, loving families, incarnational families, attractional families, and nurturing families.

**Worshiping family.** Missional families have deep-rooted relationships and love for God cultivated through family worship. An old adage says, "A family that prays together stays together." Worship plays the center stage in keeping the family unity. They do not neglect personal growth with God. Discipleship is first taught at home.

**Loving family.** The relationship between one another in the family is based on the mutual love and submission the family members have for one another. It is a strong reflection of the Trinitarian family of the Godhead where they have their own space as individuals, but work in love, respect, and communion with each other. This family models the love of Christ in their relationship by caring for each other.

**Incarnational family.** Families that choose to participate in God's mission adventure rather than their own is a family with a missional mind-set. They reject any exclusivity and choose instead to join the real world. They intentionally relate to their neighbors, friends, and relatives, thus choosing to be the presence of God in their community and context.

**Attractional family.** A family that is missional displays Christ nature in every way. One of the virtues of a missional home is its ability to attract others through the love and fellowship the home offers to others. It is a home that practices hospitality. It allows others to come and feel warmth of Jesus' love. It is a home that is well connected to others through their family hospitality. I also call this home an open home that attracts others to them and through them to Christ.

**Nurturing family.** A missional family nurtures spiritual growth and engages in discipleship through their home. Their home serves as the primary mission center fulfilling the great commission of Jesus Christ. People begin to see their home as a sacred place. It is a home that nurtures people spiritually, which includes members of the family, too.

Many Christian families have some of the above-mentioned characteristics but fail in a few of the specified areas. Some families find fulfilling the first two characteristics easier namely worship and loving one another, but difficult to fulfill the next three characteristics of being incarnational, attractional, and nurturing. Some other Christian families prefer to be associated only within their own church circles and stay in their comfort zones, and neglect relating to people outside their fellowship. Some are good in relating to others and are engaged in nurturing others, but have neglected to display love within their own home. For this study, I consider missional homes as homes that have all the five characteristics in at least varied measures in order to fulfill the greater purpose of the kingdom of God. Even if one aspect is missing, then the home would lack a key aspect of being missional. Having looked into the five characteristic of

a missional family, I next deal with the biblical and theological framework of being a missional family.

### **Biblical and Theological Framework**

Family is the first institution that God created, and it was such a close reflection of the family of the Godhead. The mission of God (*mission Dei*) to human beings when observed closely is also a family affair. The mission to create and to redeem creation is rooted in the Trinity. The Father sent the Son and the Son sent the Spirit to fulfill the mission of God to save the world. “As the father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21). The mission is rooted in the family of the Godhead. It starts in the family of the Godhead, and it is then passed on to the human family. It reveals the interconnectedness of the mission of God to the mission entrusted to human beings.

### **The Trinity: The First Missional Family**

The real model for the missional family starts with the family of the Godhead. Biblical studies of the family usually begin with Adam and Eve. Though they were the first human family, they were a reflection of the family of the Godhead. One can see in the Trinitarian relationship, all five characteristics of a missional family. Though the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equal in status and worth, Jesus, in his human limitation, always spent his time with his father in worshipping him (Mark 1:35). The high priestly prayer in John 17, where the Son intercedes on behalf of the world, shows how the Triune God was a praying family. Jesus continues to intercede sitting at the right hand of God, and the Holy Spirit is also involved in intercession on behalf of the saints when they fail in their words to express themselves (Rom. 8:26, 34). Jesus was the one who taught his disciples to call God “Our father.” They were a worshipping family.

In Genesis 1:26, the Trinitarian God in harmony and in unity created man and woman in God's image when they said, "Let us make man in our image." The oneness within the Godhead with clear functional roles needs to be the model for any family that lives in God's purpose. They were united in their mission to create human beings and also in the mission of humankind's redemption. The Son subjected himself to the Father, and the Spirit strengthened the Son to accomplish their task together. The four characteristics of Trinitarian relationships explained by Seamands bring out the dynamics of the relationship that existed within the first missional family (48). The four characteristics are full equality, glad submission, mutual deference, and joyful intimacy. These four characteristics constitute the second characteristic of a missional family—loving family. One can directly apply the characteristics of a loving family to the relationship that should exist between husband and wife in a missional family.

The first characteristic is equality. Equality does not mean equivalence but a healthy respect for and valuing of the various members of the family and recognition of their full personhood.

The second characteristic is glad submission. Glad submission calls for one's willingness to submit and engage in self-sacrifice for the sake of the other family members. Jesus showed his willingness to go through this aspect of submission and self-sacrifice in order to fulfill the family mission of the trinity to redeem mankind.

The third characteristic of the Trinitarian relationship is mutual deference. In family decision making, high distribution of responsibility means including and seeking input from everyone and distributing power among everyone as well. Although they possess definite structures and provide consistency and stability, these structures are fluid

so that they can be changed or adapted. In healthy relationships, members of the household do not hang on to their role as a symbol of pride and authority or out of fear of losing their identity, but instead they defer to one another, so that everyone is empowered for the welfare of the family.

The fourth characteristic in Trinitarian relationships is the joyful intimacy that they have with one another. They highly enjoy and value one another. In the relationship of the father and the son, their union is made explicit in the high priestly prayer of Jesus. He prays for his disciples that the “love you have for me may be in them, and that I myself may be in them” (John 17:26). The love of Jesus toward his disciples and toward this world is actually a reflection of the Father’s love toward the Son. The joy that human beings experience when they taste the love of Jesus is a glimpse of the joyful intimacy that exists among the Trinity. A missional family enjoys this joyful intimacy. The above four characteristics of a loving family should be practiced within the context of a Christian family. Ministry done outside the family cannot substitute them. As Seamands says, many Christians sacrifice their family on the altar of ministry (51).

Jesus’ incarnational ministry was a costly affair, and it cost a great deal to the deep relationship that existed within the Godhead. Jesus in his human form and weakness asked God the Father to remove the cup of suffering before he went to the cross. Though the plan of the cross was a joint plan of the Trinity for the salvation of human beings, such a cry against their joint plan would have been a tough situation for them to bypass. Jesus emptied himself and became a man to identify with his creation. The Father had sent the Son for this mission with the power of his Spirit (John 20:21). In a missional home, families make temporary yet painful sacrifices to become incarnational in their



own context. When families grow in their love for one another through the love of Christ, they are willing to make such sacrifices to enable others to experience the presence of Christ through their lives. How truly the ministry of Jesus makes the family of the Godhead an incarnational family.

Jesus was always a great crowd puller too. Many who had an encounter with Jesus were interested in following him and even living with him. He was indeed attractional. As a family the Godhead was attractional. The Son attracted his disciples to his father, the Father attracted the disciples to his Son, and the Son attracted his disciples to his Spirit. They attracted one to another within their personhood. The open invitation for everyone to come to him (John 7:37; Mark 1:17), brought many people in need to him. The homes that Jesus visited became crowded (Mark 2:2). Therefore, the Trinitarian family was an attractional family in every way.

Jesus filled his disciples with his Spirit and gave them authority to call God their Father. The missional family of the Godhead is always engaged in nurturing the disciples to greater spiritual experience. Jesus always took his serious followers to a deeper level of discipleship and intimacy. He asked his disciples to deny themselves, take up the cross, and follow him. The intercessions for the disciples by Jesus sitting at the right hand of the Father and the intercession by the Spirit of God for his disciples are great examples of a nurturing family. The promise of Jesus to be with his disciples till the end of the world in spite of the pain, suffering, and hardship and the promise of the Spirit to empower them through these experiences are all examples of a nurturing relationship found in the first missional family, the family of the Godhead. The missional Godhead who embodies a perfect missional family has used missional families both in the Old and

in New Testament to accomplish his missional purpose to redeem humankind. I will now examine prominent families from the Old and New Testament that God used for his redemptive mission.

### **Missional Families in the Old Testament**

The missional God who created humankind in his image had a greater purpose for his creation. God blessed humankind and told them to be “fruitful and increase in number” (Gen. 1:28). Unfortunately, the fall of humankind marred his image, and since the fall God has been on a mission to redeem fallen humankind. God’s mission in creating human beings was to have a deep fellowship with them. His walk with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and his search for them when they sinned (Gen. 3:8-9) shows the deep spiritual intimacy God desired with his creation. Though God created a solution for the Fall through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, he has used many families in the Old Testament to fulfill God’s mission on earth until the fullness of time that God had ordained for his Son to pay the price for human sin on the cross.

The following sections review the missional families that one finds in the Old Testament. I examine the families of Noah, Abraham, and David.

**Noah’s family.** When the sins of the people increased, God wanted to wipe out human beings from the face of the earth; he found one family through whom he could fulfill the missional purpose of his redemption. It was the family of Noah (Gen. 6). The family of Noah found favor in God’s sight. God chose Noah’s family to fulfill God’s redemptive purpose. The family of Noah was blessed with the mission originally given to Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Noah was a worshipper of God and enjoyed an intimate walk with God. The first criterion of a missional family is to

be a worshipping family, and one can evidently see that in him. In Scripture, the blessings and favor of God always seem to flow through the family and are not just limited to individuals. At a time when the sin of the world had so greatly increased, Noah's sons, who were grown up and married men, were not counted among wicked men. God's choice of filling the earth again through Noah's sons is a clear indication of the authentic family life Noah exhibited. Noah obviously had a loving family, which enjoyed good relationships with each other. They gladly submitted to one another or else they all would not have even consented to be in the ark. When the whole world jeered at them, they remained obedient and united. Though the Bible is silent about the personal walk and commitment of each member of the family of Noah, the family of Noah became recipients of God's blessing through the obedience and righteousness of the life of Noah. God was clearly not just desirous of filling the earth with human beings and animals, but his desire was to have generations of godly offspring (Mal. 2:15). God decided to destroy his own creation because of the wickedness that had increased in the human race. Thus, God's command to procreate is not merely to increase in number, but to have generations that will reflect the image of God and be desirous to fulfill God's mission in creation. Noah's family was an incarnational family that chose to be partners with God in saving God's creation and fulfilling God's mission. They would have been the most attractive family when the floodwaters rose; and when the whole world was corrupt, this family was attractive to God. They were also a nurturing family as they nurtured all the living beings in the ark. Noah's family nurtured the land after the flood (Gen. 9:20). Noah's family nurtured godly values within their own home and were instrumental in nurturing generations after them.

**Abraham's family.** God's missional purpose becomes clearer by his choice of the family of Abraham. In Genesis 12:1-3 the Lord had said to Abram to leave the country as a family:

Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.

The plan of God to bless the families of the earth through the family of Abraham is an amazing story of the mission of God being fulfilled through yet another human family. God uprooted the family of Abraham from his comfort zone and gave him a mission to bless other families. God gave a promise to Abram to make him a great nation at a time when Abram did not have a child of his own and when he was advanced in his years. He believed in the promise of God and moved to the Promised Land with his household. Abraham's family was indeed a missional family. First, wherever he went, he built an altar to God (Gen. 12:7-8; 13:18) and worshipped him. It was a worshipping family. Second, being a rich person in a polygamous culture, choosing to remain childless because of the barrenness of Sarah and caring for her is indeed a sign of a loving family. Abraham never condemned or looked down upon his wife, but both loved each other, and Sarah followed wherever Abraham went. Sarah never grumbled or rebelled against God's plan in moving them to Canaan. Third, Abraham moved out of his comfort zone and chose to live among strangers to fulfill God's plan for his family. When God promised to bless all nations through the family of Abraham, God gave the greatest promise of the Messiah. The greatest incarnation was to happen through the descendent of Abraham. The missional God was going to move his Son from the comfort zone of heaven to earth.

Abraham just had a foretaste of what was to happen centuries later through Jesus Christ. Fourth, their exemplary family life was indeed an attractive force both for their own generation and beyond. The faith of Abraham and his willingness to give the best for his nephew Lot is a matter that attracts anybody to this family. Fifth, Abraham's household of faith nurtured everyone, including their relatives and slaves. When God established his covenant with Abraham, he circumcised all the males of the household, which included the slaves bought with his money (Gen. 17:21-27). As a family they are on a journey with God, which includes everyone in their household. Abraham nurtured them in faith so that Abraham in turn could even trust his servant to find the right bride for his son Isaac (Gen. 24:2-3). All the characteristics needed for a missional family are fulfilled in the family of Abraham. God's choice of making Abraham to be a blessing to the nations shows the missional nature of God to redeem humankind to himself. Another prominent family I would like to highlight from the Old Testament is a family of a person who served God faithfully in his generation. He became the reference point for all the kings of Israel. It is the family of David.

**David's family.** David's love and devotion for God is what gave him the greatest privilege of becoming an important link in the messianic family. His psalms stand as witness for his heart of worship. First Chronicles 16, narrates the story of David bringing the ark of the Lord and pitching a tent for it. After he finished with the public worship, 1 Chronicles 16:43 states, "David returned home to bless his family." He not only prayed alone, but he prayed with his household. His love for his family, his wives, and his children is an obvious factor in David's life. His prayer for his son Solomon before he builds the temple and his mourning for the death of his son Absalom are just few

examples of a tender and loving heart of David. The outward looking missional psalms such as Psalms 2 and 67 show his incarnational heart to be a blessing to the nations.

Throughout all generations, David was the standard to evaluate other kings. His life was attractive to God and to David's generation. The way David nurtured his son Solomon had an influence even in his desire for wisdom. The prayer for wisdom was indeed the prayer of David for Solomon ( 1 Chron. 22:11-13). No wonder the missional God wanted to incarnate through the family of a missional person like David. The Scripture points to Jesus as the Son of David. David became a blessing to his generation .God delighted in David and promised that his throne would last forever (1 Chron. 17:12). God fulfilled the promise by sending Jesus to be born in the lineage of Abraham and David. David loved the Lord, he loved his family, and his missional mindset is the reason for God promising him the throne forever.

God's choice of missional families in the Old Testament started with Adam and Eve and was consummated in the New Testament in the coming of the Messiah. God chose Mary and Joseph, a missional family, to make his journey to earth. Jesus' choice of missional homes, followed by his disciples, continued the mission of God through families in the New Testament.

### **Missional Families in the New Testament**

Missional families that carried the mission of God through their homes have existed from the time of Jesus. He used homes effectively to accomplish his mission. Some of these homes continued to be mission centers even after the ascension of Jesus. Gehring examines all the houses constantly referred to in the New Testament both before Easter and after Easter. His elaborate work also looks at the use of houses in Pauline

missional outreach. His focus is to understand the evolution of house churches and their significance. His work gives enough insight to see the use of Christian homes in the early Church.

**Jesus' use of homes in the Gospels.** Many references in the Gospels show how Jesus used homes for his missional outreach. The Gospel of Mark records at least twenty-nine references to houses used by Jesus. Though all references are not directly related to this study, a significant number of references show the use of homes by Jesus for his missional outreach. The Synoptic Gospels relate that Jesus taught not only in open-air settings but in synagogues and houses as well (Gehring 29). According to Gehring, the use of houses by Jesus finds support by at least three significant insights: (1) In the ancient Jewish, Christian, and Hellenistic world, a private home often provided the meeting place for religious and intellectual dialogue and instruction; (2) considering the central economic and social significance of the *oikos* in the ancient world generally and in Palestine or Galilee specifically, houses played a central role in the life and ministry of Jesus and; (3) during Jesus' time, house synagogues were widespread, especially in Jewish villages. Meeting for worship in private homes was common during Jesus' time. For this reason, to assume that Jesus would have used houses in at least his teaching ministry and possibly for other activities as well is only reasonable (29). The house at Capernaum was one such house that Jesus used. It is believed to be the house of Peter (Mark 1:29, 33; 2:1; 3:20; 9:33). All the gospels agree that once Jesus began his public ministry, Capernaum appeared to be his preferred place of residence. The story line of Jesus' ministry always seems to return to Capernaum. This home was a place of assembly, instruction, and healing. These five verses from Mark clearly demonstrate that

Jesus' healing and teaching ministry took place in and around the house of Peter in Capernaum. Jesus could have chosen Peter's house in Capernaum because of its strategic location for the Galilean missional outreach (29).

Another house of importance in the mission of Jesus is the house at Bethany. Mark reports that Jesus often came back from Jerusalem to Bethany (Mark 11:1, 11-12) and creates the impression that Jesus stayed there for a time. Jesus along with his disciples enjoyed the hospitality of Martha in Bethany during his last stay in Jerusalem. She opened her home to them and gave them a place to stay (Luke 10:38-39; John 11:1, 18). The house of Martha almost appears to be like the counterpart to the house of Peter in Capernaum, even though according to record, it did not enjoy the same prominence. Bethany was also strategically close to Jerusalem, about 1.7 miles away (Gehring 43). The house of Bethany also served as a meeting and teaching facility (John 11:19, 31; 12:1-9; Luke 10:38-42).

Besides these two prominent houses, which also served as strategic mission centers, Jesus used the homes of many people who were his followers who lived in Galilee (Mark 1:29-31), Judea (Matt. 24:16; Mark 13:14; 14:3; Luke 19:1-10; 21:21; 26:6) and in the Decapolis (Mark 5:19-20; Luke 8:37-39; Gehring 43). The homes Jesus used to instruct, teach, and stay would have quite possibly gained prominence and significance as the home of the new family in Jesus even during the time of Jesus. In this newfound spiritual family, God is the father (Matt. 23:9), and Jesus is the head of the household (Matt. 10:25). The older women who follow him are mothers and the men his brothers (Mark 3:34; Gehring 47).



The disciples continued to use homes for their missional outreach after Jesus ascended. Some of the homes used during Jesus time continued as popular meeting places. The book of Acts mentions some of the houses used after Easter.

**Use of houses in post-Easter period in Jerusalem.** The book of Acts records many houses used as meeting places for the early Christians. They gathered in the house of Mary the mother of John Mark (Acts 12:12), the upper room was above the house where the disciples were staying (Acts 1:12-15), the early Christians broke bread in their own homes (Acts 2:42), and they continued to proclaim Jesus as Christ both in the temple and in their individual houses (Acts 5:42). Acts 12:10-17, narrates the incident of Peter's release from the prison and coming to the home of Mary the mother of John, where many of them were praying for the release of Peter. With extensive research using archeological and historical evidence, Gehring concludes that the private domestic house served as the foundation for missional outreach and community formation in the primitive church in Jerusalem, just as it did in the ministry of Jesus and his disciples. He says that the small size of house churches helped them to maintain a family atmosphere and practice brotherly love in a personal and concrete ways. Thus, he feels these homes became attractive to outsiders. Homes also served as evangelistic contacts with its built-in network of relationships reaching beyond the immediate family to servants, friends, clientele, and business associates (117).

**Prominent missional households beyond Jerusalem.** The houses of families who went through a household conversion experience became missional households. In an era when spirituality is becoming a private and individual affair, the household conversion stories also throw light on God's missional purpose in household salvation.

The missional family of the Godhead is keenly interested in the conversion of the family. Luke speaks of four household conversions: that of Cornelius “and all his family” in Caesarea (Acts 10:2), that of Lydia “and the members of her household” in Philippi (Acts 16:15), that of Paul’s jailer “and all his family” in Philippi (Acts 16:33), and Crispus “and his entire household” in Corinth (Acts 18:8). All these households appear to be headed by people of some social status: a centurion, a businesswoman dealing in a luxury item, a civil servant, and the *archisynagogos* (a person who designates the person who built the synagogue or who financed its regular maintenance; Branick 62). In all likelihood these households became prominent house churches in the development of house churches in these cities.

**Missional households in Pauline letters.** The frequency of family and household terminology in Paul for the Christian community is striking. Paul refers to believers with terms like *brothers*, *sister*, *son*, *children*, *child*, and also refers to Rufus’s mother as one “who has been a mother to me too” (Rom. 16:13). This vocabulary shows the mind of Paul in seeing the whole body of Christ as one big family. Paul lived this family relationship with his coworkers and communities, and he wanted them to live in the same way (Branick 16).

The book of Acts reports on Christian house meetings in the Pauline mission in the cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Troas. The letters of Paul also mention such groups in Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:19), Rome (Rom. 16:3, 5), Colossae (Philem. 1- 2, 21-23), Laodicea (Col. 4:15), and implicitly in Corinth (1 Cor.), and Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1-2). Paul, though he debated and proclaimed about Christ in the synagogues and in public places, constantly relied on the homes of people to accomplish his mission and also to

initiate house churches in the houses that lodged him. One home I would specially like to highlight is the household of Aquila and Priscilla. They used their home most effectively for missional outreach compared to other couples or households mentioned in the New Testament. They established house churches in three different locations of the Pauline mission: Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. Though the text does not speak directly about a house church in Corinth, evidence indicates that initially the couple established a house church in their home, even though Paul later moves to the house of Titus Justus (Gehring 145). Claudius, by his edict drove away some of the Romans from Rome (Acts 18:1-4) mostly because of the conflict between Jewish and Jewish Christians over their faith in Christ (Branick 60). The edict made Aquila and Priscilla move from Rome to Corinth. Paul remembers this couple with such profoundness maybe because of their unshakable faith and devotion to Christ, their ability to discern and teach correctly the Word of God even to people like Apollos (Acts 18:26), and their ability to use their home with clear missional motive. Their hospitality to Paul and other evangelists, their willingness to use their profession to connect with others (Acts 18:3), and their ability to start house churches in all the locations they moved are outstanding missional characteristics of this couple. These characteristics make them truly a missional couple. They have all the missional characteristics that I have defined. They were a worshipping family, they were united as a couple in their mission (loving), they always engaged with people through their trade and in sharing the gospel (incarnational), and three home churches in three of their places of residence stood as a witness for an attractional family. They nurtured many believers through their homes in faith including mature Christians like Apollos (nurturing family). Their home was indeed a landmark for many early Christians.

Other households used by Paul were the households of Titius Justus (Acts 18:7), Crispus (Acts 18:8), Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:16), Gaius (1 Cor. 1:14), Erastus (Acts 19:22; 2 Tim 4:20), Phoebe (Rom. 16:1), Philemon (vv. 1-2), and Nympha (Col. 4:15). All the early disciples used homes for missional outreach just like Paul using the above-mentioned homes. The early Christians saw the need to use their homes for missional activity, which itself became a trademark for their self-identification:

For about a century the private dwelling shaped the Christians' community life, forming the environment in which Christians related to each other, providing an economic substructure for the community, a platform for missionary work, a frame work for leadership and authority, and probably a definite role for women. Above all the private home and specifically the dining room provided an environment that corresponded remarkably with the Christians' earliest self-identification. (Branick 15)

Thus, homes played a significant part in shaping the Christian identity in the early Church.

### **Household Codes and Ethics of a Missional Family**

A missional home is a home on a public pedestal. The reactions and responses of a missional home get observed and watched. It plays a significant part in missions. The behavior of every member, the hospitality practiced, and the love and respect people have for each other reflect their deep beliefs and faith. Therefore, when God chose Israel as a nation for his missional purpose, he gave them codes and ethics to live by. God did not want them to live like any other nation. Every individual home had to practice those codes and laws, which in turn would reflect God and his principles to the world. When Paul writes to the churches, he mentions the household codes and ethics that Gods people are to follow.

## **Household Codes in the Old Testament**

The Law of Moses has instructions specific to the family, and the code of ethics is widely covered in the law. The only commandment in the Ten Commandments God gave to the people of Israel that has a direct incentive is the fifth commandment of honoring father and mother. He promised that doing so would help people to live long and go well with them. Through the law, God gave to the people of Israel details on how everyone should behave as God's holy people. God desired that his people's lifestyle should be beyond reproach. He made those rules and regulations because he wanted higher standards for God's holy people. God laid down specific commandments for parents, children, husband and wife relationship, slaves, captives, divorcees, etc., so that their conduct would be according to God's holy standard. The mandate for parents in Deuteronomy 6:7-9 was for parents to intentionally pass on a godly legacy. Parents had to teach the commandments of God in their home to their children. These godly virtues had to be first practiced at home for children to imbibe. Parents cannot ignore their responsibilities or pass them on to the temple priests or to the Levites of those days. Parents received specific commands to discipline a rebellious and stubborn son and if the son continues to disobey and would not listen, the parents were to bring him to elders, and they would execute him (Deut. 21:18-21). Thus, the Old Testament Law does not make light of family issues such as rebellious sons' conduct; instead, the Law dealt through severe punishment, which reflects God's expectation of conduct in a godly home. These household codes have a missional mandate as God wanted the people of Israel through their conduct and lifestyle to be attractive to other nations so that other nations would come to know the only true God of Israel. Israel's failure to live up to that godly

standard sent them to exile, and they faced God's wrath as a nation. Every household's conduct in both the Old and New Testament has a missional mandate, and it directly affects God's plan for eternity.

### **Household Codes in the New Testament**

In Colossians 3:18-4:1 and Ephesians 5:22-23, Paul addresses the various members of the household. The specialty of these two passages shows the tendency of Paul to address people based on household roles such as husbands, wives, slaves, or masters. First Timothy 2:1-15, 5:1-2, 6:1-2, Titus 2:1-3:8, and 1 Peter 2:13-3:7 also contain teachings similar in tone and form. These passages bring out clearly the expectation of the behavior and conduct of people who belong to the household of God. James D. G. Dunn says these passages on household codes demonstrate how common was the concern in second and third generation Christians that the Christian household should be well ordered (43). Family and the kingdom of God are intrinsically connected. The family unit is the nucleus of the kingdom of God. Thus, the conduct of every family member is important as his or her conduct reflects the kingdom of God to the world. Children enhance their understanding of God and his kingdom through the relationship parents have with their children. Ephesians 5 compares the relationship between husband and wife to the relationship of Christ and the Church. Paul even makes clear that one who is unable to take care of his own household cannot take care of God's household. Care for God's household should be an overflow of one's love for one's own family. These detailed descriptions of household roles also show expectation and sensitivity to a wider social expectation of a child of God. Such expectation increased because it was a common concern in the Greco-Roman world.

At the same time, the influence of Jewish ethics and values seems to be stronger, and the Christian motivation with reference to the Lord pervades the whole (Dunn 53). To become a member of the new family of Jesus did not justify neglect of household, and it served at least two purposes. Firstly, since all the earlier churches were “house-churches,” the model of a well-ordered household also served as a model of a well-ordered congregation (56). The life of household members becomes a public spectacle to exhibit the Christ whom each of them are proclaiming. One cannot have a bad and abusive relationship with his wife, then speak about God’s love and care to his children. If one does not live out the message, then the message will find no acceptance, however true and good it may sound. Secondly, good household management served as a witness to the community. “The fact that the Christians used similar household codes would thus indicate to their neighbors that they too shared the same concern for society and its good order” (57). Hence, household codes in the early church served an ecclesiological and missional purpose.

Similarly today, a missional family should live such an exemplary life through the power of God and his Spirit. The concept of lighthouse families or missional families needs to be first attractional to others. The attractional aspect of their family life is what makes them missional. It is attractional by the way they conduct their lifestyle and missional by their desire to reach out to other families. Mission and evangelism begins at home. Children at home should be the primary evangelistic target before the family moves out to reach others. Roy. W. Fairchild says, “Parents are the child’s first ‘socializers.’ They teach the children that he is not the centre of the world” (110). In a Christian home, one’s own children become the first disciples. Discipleship starts at

home. The word *discipline* comes from the Greek word *disceo*, which means “learning.” Unfortunately, the word *discipline* has taken on other meanings, which are foreign to its original sense. Only when one internalizes discipline do they become disciples (111). The desire to see their own children coming to know the Lord should be the primary goal of any Christian parents. Jesus himself was concerned about his own before he moved on to the Gentiles. Jesus’ principle of being a witness in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria and to the ends of the earth is profound as it emphasizes the importance of starting where one is. Being a witness in one’s own home has a significant part in being a missional family.

### **Key Characteristics of Missional Households in the New Testament**

The Christian homes in the early Church were attractional, and they had a unique role in fulfilling God’s mission. Many characteristics stand out as common features in the missional households of the early Christian era. They are hospitality, the role of women at home, household codes and ethics, family patronage, informal setting, love, openness, and the influence of the householder.

#### **Hospitality**

One of the main characteristics that stand out is the hospitality of these families.

M. Green says that many literatures bear witness to the hospitality of the early Christians:

The sheer informality and relaxed atmosphere of the home, not to mention the hospitality which must have gone with it, all helped to make this form of evangelism [household evangelism] particularly successful. There are many literatures other than the New Testament like the Clementine Recognitions that bear testimony to the hospitality of the home. (208)

Hospitality was crucial in the early house church organization for evangelization and for ongoing religious education (Osiek and Balch 208). Even in general among the early Christians, hospitality remained an important Christian virtue. Early Church fathers such



as Tertullian warned against mixed marriage because of its effect on Christian hospitality. Osiek and Balch quote Tertullian and he says, “A Christian wife whose non-Christian husband will thwart her duties, like giving hospitality to traveling Christians” (209). Joel B. Green also shares this view in his article; he concludes that household hospitality played a crucial role in the spread of Christianity, especially from the homes mentioned by Luke in Acts whose households were baptized (90). Gehring says that the early Christians practiced hospitality for both Christians and non-Christians alike in concrete ways (293).

### **The Role of Women**

Women played a crucial role in the use of the home for evangelism. One fourth of the coworkers mentioned in the undisputed Pauline epistles are women (Gehring 211). Because limited opportunities existed for women outside the home in Greco-Roman times, they took an active role in the ministry within the home, starting with hospitality. (Branick 50) The mother of the family in many ways was the manager of the household, and the widow often stood in place of her deceased spouse for business activities (21). Given Christianity’s Jewish roots, women obviously did not enjoy an equal status with men, but in the newly formed faith community of the early Church, women played quite an important role in the spread of the gospel. Paul in his letters mentions the names of women in his greetings and exhortations. These mentions show a relatively heavy involvement of women even in providing leadership in the Pauline house churches. The leadership roles for women in the early church, especially in the context of the Greco-Roman world and the Jewish world, would have been an attractive factor about a Christian home and served as an important characteristic of a missional home.

## **Household Codes and Ethics**

As discussed above in the section on New Testament household codes, Paul gave instructions to exhort the leaders of the church of his spiritual son Timothy (1 Tim. 3). He specifically warns the leaders of the church (mostly those in whose homes the church met) to manage their household well, including their wives and children. The way the householders conducted themselves played a vital role in attracting others to their homes.

In Colosians 3:18-4:1, Paul clearly lists out the members of the family who constitute the ancient household, namely, the husband and wife, children and slaves, and master. Each had a code of ethics to follow in their home. Dunn calls it the basic three-fold relationship of ancient household (43). Paul went through the responsibility of each of them and wanted each member of the household to display love and submission as is fitting in the Lord. Paul's emphasis especially on men to love to their wives and be kind to their children and their slaves shows the expectation for the householder to show an exceptional attitude in their behavior. This passage included each family member including slaves who were an integral part of the early Christian homes. The emphasis could be more on men because they could be the leader of their house church and could serve as a potential hindrance for their listeners if they did not practice what they preached. In Ephesians 5:21-33, Paul reiterates the need for men to love their wives and for women to respect their husbands in the context of mutual submission to one another. For both submission and love, the model is Christ Jesus. To demonstrate Christ's love for the church, he gave up himself for the Church on the Cross of Calvary. Christ submitted himself to the will of his father voluntarily in order to fulfill the greater plan of God.

God's expectation for families to demonstrate such deep love and care would allow people to get a foretaste of Christ's love.

### **Family Patronage**

Christian families made their homes available for Christian assembly, householders provided and guaranteed the material and organizational foundation for church development. Early Christians took advantage of the social network in the household, profession, and associations of the householder to promote missional outreach and congregational development (Gehring 292). Sometime in the second century, people began dedicating their homes to Church gatherings and worship. The building ceased to be a residence (Branick 15).

### **Informal Settings, Love, and Openness**

The informal setting of a home provided a good atmosphere to care for and show brotherly and sisterly love to both Christians and non-Christians. People experienced the safety and security of the *familia Dei*. People from various social backgrounds, including householders, slaves, Jews and gentiles, men, women, and even unbelieving children, were part of this new community that met in homes. Gehring confirms this fact by recent socio-historical research of the early house churches by (293). People felt welcomed and cared for in these missional homes. The caring and welcoming nature of the early Christians was a unique characteristic of the missional homes by which people with such differing background became one cohesive unit.

### **The Influence of the Leader of the Household**

Homes that became missional homes had a person who was the key influencer. The leadership of the householders, such as the family of Cornelius or the home of Lydia

or the home of Aquila and Priscilla, made a difference in making their homes a missional outreach center. A household head or paterfamilias would have legal responsibility for the group meeting in the house (Branick 21). The openness and influence of the leader at home determined the use of home for missional purpose. The number of people attracted by the home attracted also shows the influence of the leader. Paul's missional strategy always was in influencing such influencers. Paul could influence and was able to win over homeowners along with their entire household, especially of higher social levels (Gehring 187). His ability to become a guest of these important people in society also helped him to interact with high quality contacts, and the householders were able to create an immediate audience for Paul by inviting their friends, relatives, and clientele.

### **Model Missional Family: The Family of Cornelius**

Acts 10 reveals the model home displayed by Cornelius and the proactive work of God that was operational in Cornelius's home even before he became a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. The influence of his home even caused Peter to exclaim in Acts 10:34, 35, "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right." Cornelius's family has all the characteristics for a missional family. However, an interesting fact to note is that Cornelius's home, even before he encountered Christ, had missional characteristics. Thus, for this research I will look in detail at the missional model of Cornelius's family. Though Cornelius's family truly became a missional home after his conversion, as a God fearer, his life and his influence on his own family, relatives, colleagues, and friends truly makes his home the model home for this study.

Luke mentions Cornelius as a man in an important port city in an important position. Presumably, he was a man who was quite busy because of his responsibilities and position. Luke goes on to introduce him in Acts 10:2 as a “devout” and “God-fearing man” with his entire household. According to John Peter Lange, the term used for devout is the most general term, which can even apply to a strictly pagan form of devotedness (191). Luke uses the word *devout* also in reference to Simeon in Luke 2:25, to the devout Jews who came to Jerusalem (Acts 2:5), to the men who buried Stephen (Acts 8:2), and to Ananias to whom Saul was led, as devout men according to the law (Acts 22:12). It can also give insight into the impression that Luke had about Cornelius that he used the same word he would use to describe any other Christian, even though Cornelius did not know Christ as his God. He still lived a righteous life surpassing the righteousness of the Pharisees (Matt. 5:20).

Luke uses the expression “God-fearing” or “God-fearers” specifically to describe people who have had an inclination to the Jewish religion and mainly the ones who were seeking the God of Israel (Acts 10:22; 13:26; 13:50; 17:4; 17:17). The fact that the attenders who went from Cornelius to meet with Peter exclaimed about Cornelius as “God fearing and respected by all the Jewish people” (Acts 10:22) could have been specifically to convince Peter to come with them. Cornelius was a seeker of God and even had some of the Jewish practices such as praying at three in the afternoon. (Though the text does not say he was praying at that time, the vision at three in the afternoon could be during his time of prayer.) Cornelius’s diligent prayer and his alms to the poor had heavenly recognition (Acts 10:4). Though he had not made any visible confession or

taken any step in becoming a proselyte, God accepted his prayers and alms giving as a memorial offering.

Cornelius's faith was not just an individual experience, but rather it was contagious to his entire household. In the book of Acts, the word *household* is repeatedly used especially in the context of people receiving salvation (Acts 11:14; 16:15, 31, 34; 18:8). That his entire household was God fearing shows how he was responsible for them. "He and all his family" (10:2), qualifies the entire household, including not just the immediate family but also servants, slaves, freedmen, laborers, and sometime even business associates and tenants. The householder usually had influence or full authority over the members of the household. The household also provided the members with some sense of security and identity that the larger political and social structures were unable to give (Hawthorne, Martin and Reid 417). Hence, Cornelius gave them a godly identity through his life and had an intentionally godly influence on his immediate family, slaves, servants, attenders, and the poor in society. Cornelius lived out his faith in a tangible way evident by his impact on his household and the society. Especially in the new changing scenario of India, where the men of the houses are missing due to career affairs and mothers have moved to value career over motherhood, Cornelius's family life serves as a model and a challenge to begin charity at home. His family was a worshipping family and a loving family, the first two characteristics of missional family.

Cornelius's family also influenced the various strata of the society starting from his home. As a centurion in an important port city, he could have faced time constraints due to his responsible position, but his influence moves from his home to many others at various levels reflecting Acts 1:8 (to be my witness in Jerusalem [his own home], Judea,

Samaria, and the ends of the earth). If the influence of Cornelius is represented in concentric circles, the nucleus of the circle would be his own family. All his family was devout and God fearing (Acts 10:2). One of the common words that people use today is the word *busy*. No one seems to have time for anyone. Most people are busy at work, and often one tends to neglect time with the family. His influence over his home where he could even pass on his faith is impressive. His faith was contagious, and it certainly indicates the time he spent with his family.

His second circle of influence was his relatives (Acts 10:24). His thirst for his relatives to go through the spiritual experience of his family when Peter visits them is noteworthy. In an individualistic society when such concerns for relatives are fast disappearing, Cornelius indeed serves as a great model for a missional mind-set. The exhortation of Paul to care and provide for needy relatives is worth mentioning here (1 Tim. 5:4, 8). Those who do not Paul addresses as “worse than unbelievers.” Probably he described them this way because these virtues were among unbelievers and was not expected behavior from a believer. The household hospitality mentioned above was an expected Christian virtue. Cornelius amazingly had these virtues even before he came to know Christ.

The third circle of influence is his close friends and his colleagues (Acts 10:7-8, 24). His experience of an angel appearing to him was likely not an easy thing to share with his servants and his colleague, but he was comfortable sharing this experience with his colleagues, and they went to meet Peter believing in this experience of Cornelius. Faith sharing between his friends and colleagues made Cornelius comfortable to invite them to meet with Peter. Perhaps, Cornelius was a man burdened about his friends. He

wanted his friends and colleagues to know the truth that he knew. To be an influence to his friends and colleagues, his lifestyle and work ethic should be beyond reproach.

Cornelius's friends testified to Peter about his righteousness from what they had observed. They said voluntarily based on their observation. His home was missional as it had a circle of influence beyond his own family and relatives. His family truly was attractional and served as a home of faith and nurturing, which are key characteristics of a missional family.

The fourth circle is his influence on society. Though Cornelius was a man of position and possession, his life was connected to the poor and needy of the society. Connecting to the world beyond his comfort zone is the incarnational aspect of a missional family. He generously gave to those in need (Acts 10:2). Learning to give is a virtue a family should practice. His home had access to the poor and needy, and he blessed their lives through his gifts. When people climb up the social ladder, the temptation is often to isolate oneself from common people. The person's position often becomes unreachable for the common man, but Cornelius used his position correctly. He knew the need to care for the poor and needy. His prayers and his gifts to the poor went to God as a memorial offering. God noticed his generosity to the poor. When Jesus explained about dividing the sheep and the goats, he emphasized that deeds have a part in deciding one's eternity (Matt. 25:32-46). Missional families cannot ignore the poor and the needy and call themselves the children of God.

The fifth circle from the nucleus is his influence on even his enemies. Jews considered Roman soldiers as their enemies. Jewish people respected Cornelius (Acts 10:22). Even his enemies had nothing bad to comment about Cornelius. His life must



have been so righteous and authentic that even the Jews could not find too much to negatively comment about him. This incident of Peter meeting Cornelius is quite strange; God had something to teach Peter through the life of Cornelius. A family of influence goes beyond ethnic and cultural background and can influence anyone who is in touch with them. When Peter came, Cornelius says that “We are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us” (Acts 10:33). His home had become a sacred space. The movement of Christian worship from the temple and synagogues to the home of a gentile is indeed a noteworthy incident. I am reminded of Jesus telling the Samaritan woman in John 4:23, “True worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.” The sacred person determines the sacred place. His home became the sacred place. The home of Cornelius had become an important mission center. Peter’s conversion from being a “Jewish Christian” to “Christlike Christian” happened in the home of Cornelius. His home broke the barrier that divided Jews and gentiles. Cornelius’s home could even cause his enemies (Jews) to sense God. Cornelius’s home displayed reverence for God and his people. God opened Peter’s eyes to see the work of God that crosses barriers. Such authentic family life, which displayed a culture of love, warmth, and prayer, is truly a characteristic of a missional home.

The sixth and the last circle of influence went beyond the skies. Cornelius’s family life even exerted an influence in the heavens. His prayers and his gifts went as a memorial offering to God (Acts 10:4). His family was a matter of discussion in heaven, which moved the heavens to bring an angel to him. The family of Cornelius lived by the light he had received. He prayed like the Jews at three in the afternoon, which shows some influence that the Jews had on him. He lived based on what he understood about

God, and with that knowledge he could influence the heavens. Cornelius received more light when he lived in the light he received. A home that exerts influence even to the heavenly realm is indeed a missional home. The missional God would indeed notice it.

### **Household and Household of God**

The missional homes that exerted influence on their neighborhoods slowly transformed into house churches. Therefore, missional homes in the early Church played a vital role in church planting. Missional homes have an ecclesiological significance too. This kind of church planting movement is not unfamiliar in India and other Eastern countries. Thus, the use of the phrase *household of God* for the Church shows the close link of the family of God with individual families.

Missional homes were the homes where the believers met for worship. Missional homes were homes that became house churches. Such missional homes had great influence on the established churches in later centuries. The third century saw the growing tendency toward buildings owned by the congregation used for exclusively religious purposes. The large basilican church buildings only started during the period of Constantine (Gehring 289). Paul's use of the word *household* for both house church and the family is understandable with the close link that naturally existed between the two institutions of church and family. P. H. Towner explains how the household terminology of Paul to describe the church sheds more light into Paul's thinking about God's people and their life in relation to God and one another (419). First Timothy 3:15 describes the church in Ephesus as the "household of God" (*oikos theou*). Rather than just calling it a building or a meeting place, Paul draws on the concept of household as a social unit, made up of various members, each responsible to one another and ultimately to the householder to

emphasize the need for appropriate behavior among the various groups in the church. Therefore, looking at history one can understand that a missional home has the potential to become a house church. Its many members would be from one's own neighborhood with the householder becoming the leader of the house church. The conduct of every member of the family would also matter as an attractional aspect in order for their neighborhood to be part of their house church.

### **God's Plan for Household Salvation**

The New Testament understanding of household salvation has great implications for the Indian urban context. Atul Y. Aghamkar, an urban Indian missiologist quotes George Peter saying that household evangelism and household salvation are the most basic biblical and cultural approaches and expectations and need revival in our days (Aghamkar). Aghamkar says, "The history of the church in India clearly shows that whenever individuals and their families were encouraged to become Christians, great people movements took place" (Aghamkar ). The need for families to be reached more than just individuals comes from the understanding of God's intent to offer salvation to families not to just individuals. Though every individual has a role in confessing with his or her mouth that Jesus is Lord to be saved, I see many of the conversion stories of the New Testament having a direct impact on the family to which that person belongs. Lydia's conversion (Acts 16:15), Cornelius's conversion (Acts 10:48), and the jailer's conversion (Acts 16:31-33) specifically mention a household salvation. To the jailer's question of what to do to be saved, Paul and Silas replied to the jailor to believe in the Lord:

Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the

others in his house. At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized. (Acts 16:31-33)

The disciples spoke of a salvation that would not be just for the jailer, but for the whole household. These words not only teach that if a man or woman believes God for the salvation of one's own soul he or she will be saved, but that if one believes, God will save his or her household. God will surely save a person's household for his or her faith, as he saves that person's soul for his or her faith. Believing parents obviously would pray for the salvation of their children, and their faith and their intentional passing on of God's word will bring their children into the salvation experience. Paul refers to an unbelieving husband or wife being sanctified by a believing spouse in 1 Corinthians 7:14: "For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy." Likewise he commends Timothy to carry on the godly legacy that came from his mother and grandmother. "I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also" (2 Tim. 1:5).

One member of the household coming to know Christ has deep implications and profound impact on the entire family. If the person, who is in the Lord, believes for the salvation of his or her household, God often makes it so in his will. Household salvation has great significance, especially in an Indian community, which has strong relational bonds as families. "In India when individuals decide to leave their traditional religion, they are considered traitors. The church must take care to allow the gospel to penetrate through families and kinship webs" (Aghamkar ). In India, many people, especially in

Northeast India, have come to know Christ as a whole community because the community chief became a Christian. Northeast India has many states that are fully Christian because of such conversions. They live as one big family, and so the decision of the village or community head affects the entire village or tribe. Though such conversions may have a negative effect as many become Christians without having a personal experience, the faith community in which they are regularly involved eventually helps them to know Christ. Similarly in families where mothers or fathers have come to know Christ, their decision affects their entire family. Evangelist John Linton says that one must believe and pray for the entire household to be saved:

It is in believing for their salvation which saves them. Only when we prayed believing for ourselves were we saved, and only when we pray believing for them, does God promise to save them. Assuredly they will not be saved unless they believe for themselves, but they will believe for themselves and be saved if we believingly ask God to save them and trust God to bring that to pass. (9)

God wants to save families, and the many examples in Scripture make this fact obvious. It started in creation when God saw it was not good for the man to be alone (Gen. 2:18). It continues in the calling of Abraham and his family to move from their comfort zone to follow God in order that the families of the earth would be blessed through him (Gen. 12:3). Because of so much individualism and emphasis today on personal salvation, God's desire to save the families of the earth often goes unnoticed. However, the calling of God often has a family emphasis, and his desire to save is not concerned with just the single individual but the entire household and also the generations to come. The householder's faith has deep implication for the family members both in the Old and New Testaments. Noah was a righteous man, and that saved his family (Gen. 7:1; Heb. 11:7). He believed God would give him his family, including his three daughters-in-law. On the

night of the Passover (Exod. 12), God saved Israel by families. Though only Lot was righteous in Sodom, the Lord rescued the family of Lot, though his daughters and his wife were not godly (Gen. 19). As in the case of Lot's wife, if the family members go beyond the grace extended toward the family through that one saved person, they will have to bear the consequence for their action.

The biblical and theological understanding of God's mission through families highlights the continuing work of God to establish his kingdom through missional families. His strategy of using homes that have submitted to his will continues even today, which is evident through many testimonies of household evangelism. The mission of God in household salvation is of great significance especially in families in India, which has a strong kinship culture. The following section will look into the context of this research by looking at Indian families and specifically urban Indian families.

### **Indian Families**

Indian families have a strong kinship culture and are known for their strong family ties. Unfortunately in the last two decades, Indian families have gone through a silent revolution and metamorphosis, which is surfacing by its steep increase in family conflicts, divorce rates and family suicides. Therefore, this section will look at the changing patterns of traditional families and their effect on Indian urban families.

### **Traditional Indian Families**

"Indian society, comprised of almost four thousand distinct communities (people groups), is still largely made up of united households" (Ayer). Traditional Indian society is known for its joint family system. Choodie Shivaram says that the "joint family is a sacred institution deeply rooted in Hindu heritage." Joint families consist of many

relatives living under one roof and sharing one kitchen and often a single bank account.

Though a clear categorization of families in India is not possible because of the many kinds of family systems that still exist in India, P. D. Devanandan and M. M. Thomas attempted to categorize four types of families. The four categories give a better picture of the family categorization in India:

1. Large joint families of three or four generations living together in the same house
2. The small joint family composed of a household in which parents live with their married sons and other unmarried children
3. The nuclear family composed of one or two generations in which one or both parents live with the children,
4. The nuclear family with dependent children along with one or more dependents. (15)

These four categories of families constitute largely the family patterns in India, though there are many new patterns evolving because of people migrating to different states of India and abroad for work, where they do not have any dependent other than their own children.

Nuclear families in India in many ways are really not nuclear as seen in the Western world, because families have strong family ties with their extended families, such as parents, grandparents, etc., though they may be living elsewhere for economic reasons. Extended families include members who live in other dwellings or locales, near or far. Generally, Indians hold family progress, unity, and support in high regard throughout their lives. Many live in an extended family, in which every member has their own role, often determined by age and gender. Elders are supposed to use their experience and wisdom to help guide younger family members. Indian families cherish their children and the children can look forward to continual family support throughout their lives. In return, children have to respect family ties and wishes. The head of the household, either the father or a grandfather, exercises tremendous decision-making

powers such as the choosing of life partners for eligible girls and boys, the investment of money, the resolving of interpersonal conflicts, etc. These decisions are by consultation between adult male members of the family under the authority of the head of the family. Women play a role by privately influencing their male counterparts (Ayer). Though the traditional pattern of Indian families held the families together, it had its own weakness. These weaknesses rarely come out in the open because of the social stigma attached to family conflicts and separation. The male dominated patriarchal system had women confined to the four walls of their home, abusive elders of the family made decisions that were partial, every decision had to go through the family council, which consisted of family members such as uncles, aunts, and grandparents which made life cumbersome, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law issues were common in Indian families, incest and sexual abuse within the family went on without much noise; but the family unit appeared intact and members often went through pain and frustrations without finding a release. As a family counselor, I would attribute the sudden rise of divorce also to the new sense of liberation families have found from the old closed model of Indian families. Hence, to understand the changing patterns of Indian families is important.

### **Urban India: Changing Patterns in the Family**

The family as an institution has survived fulfilling numerous functions—social, economic, emotional, relational, and psychological well-being and integration (Devanandan, Thomas, and George 15). Joseph George attributes the changing patterns in Indian families to a process of secularization that has happened to the “sacred Indian family” (12). To call the changing patterns the secularization of family from a sacred stance is indeed endorsing the earlier Indian system family system as *sacred*. Though the



aspect of secularization of families is true, I would not subscribe to the view of the earlier being more *sacred* than the present. Though the changing patterns have an individualistic tendency, I do not see either the old or the new from as a sacred position, but instead I see in both a positive and a negative side. However, the changing patterns have affected India as a nation, because the shift in patterns has too quickly come almost in the form of an epidemic. The large population in India always attributes to the spread of anything whether good or bad. The quick shift because of the liberalization and globalization of India has led to a generation confused with the sudden change in economics, the social liberalization of women, increased opportunities for work, global exposure especially to the West, huge incomes and media explosion, technological advancement. These quick changes and the bombardment of this new culture, which India was not equipped to receive, has brought about radical change to the basic nucleus of the society called family. Understanding the major contributing factors for the changing patterns in the urban Indian family will help in understanding the urban Indian family better.

**Social sanctions.** One of the reasons for the prominent changes in family life has been the social sanctions in India. The new legislations, directives of the judiciary, and the political process in India that deal with measures relating to the rights and privileges of women, the welfare of children, and the economically and socially deprived groups has contributed to the changing patterns of family in India ((Devanandan, Thomas, and George 23). Laws forcing compulsory education, reservations for lower classes, employment for women, etc. made a big difference in the excelling of women in education, which made way for many women to pursue a career. Raising the marriageable age for women to eighteen also helped women pursue their studies, since

their parents no longer married them off early. The legal system that brought changes to the status and rights of women has also helped women to establish their rights, including the right to ancestral property. Even the presence of women in legislative bodies at all levels of political process has contributed to the changing patterns.

**Education.** Education has played a major role in the changing family patterns in India. The change in educational facilities and structures and the increase of educational institutions has caused many families to take advantage of opportunities available to both males and females. “These opportunities for formal education have drastically changed values, attitudes, relational patterns and their belief systems” ( Devanandan, Thomas, and George 24).

**Occupation and work culture.** New opportunities that have flooded India with the coming of multinational companies have helped many, especially from middle and lower economic strata of families, to find jobs with good salaries. Two decades ago, the most lucrative, stable and well-paid jobs were government jobs, but this picture is no longer true. Not many enter into government services, but people now prefer jobs in the information technology sectors and the like. The attractive financial package by computer giants and other companies have made the younger generation seek for jobs that have better pay. Loyalty to the employer or the company has become outdated as many keep changing jobs based on career opportunities and high salary. These high salaries have turned people’s heart toward their jobs and career, and they ceaselessly work for the company without limiting their time. With their first love toward their work, they find their emotional gratification from their jobs, titles, and pay package and neglect their relationships with their families. Young persons with large amounts of money deprive

themselves of normal social interactions and distance themselves from traditional patterns of caring interactions that are personally appealing and emotionally enriching (Devanandan, Thomas, and George 24). With the information technology companies and business processing offices increasing their operations in India, many of them work in the time zones of the Western world. For this reason, many work U. S. and U. K. office hours, which is late at night in India. They miss the usual family and social interactions and limit themselves to a social and emotional life around their colleagues. Constant reports of increasing promiscuity from this *generation of the night*, are a growing concern for families.

**Economic growth, materialism, and independence.** The new economic growth has resulted in an increase in purchasing power. An average Indian urban family two decades back would dream of building their own home usually when the earning member of the family reached retirement. They usually save up for their next generation, but with the sudden boom in one's salary and with easy financial options, many young individuals buy their own home and all the needed equipment even before they start their family or within the first five to ten years of married life. Increased income also adds undue pressure on the young couple and often results in financial rifts in their marriage. In spite of this generation having everything, the physical, emotional, and psychological needs of the spouses and children are not adequately met (Devanandan, Thomas, and George 27). Taking advantage of this deprivation, the advertisers of various products give material substitutes to human interactions, quality time, and mutually supportive living situations. Joseph George calls it the "commodification of family experience" (27). Huge salaries and huge debts have caused families with two incomes to keep their individual accounts

separately. In some cases, salaries and assets are kept secret in a marriage relationship. The growing individualistic attitude by the newfound economic freedom, especially for women, has contributed to the growing setback in family life.

**Intercaste, interfaith, and interethnic marriages.** Due to closer interactions with people of different caste, faith, and ethnicity, a growing trend has emerged among the younger generation, to marry someone outside of their own religious, caste, or ethnic groups. This trend is becoming more common but would earlier have been seen as a special case. J. George says this growing trend cannot be fully understood unless one also considers the confusion, friction, anger, rejection, and indifference encountered during the processes of entering into that intercultural marital relationship (31).

**Influence of media and technology.** The influence of media and technology has affected the family in a major way. Television, computers, Internet, and mobile phones have become part of the urban family. Media has changed the lifestyle of urban Indians. With more than one hundred channels of all kinds for the low cost of cable, even families in the slums of India have television sets in their homes. They have robbed families of quality time and have made many glued to the never-ending series of soap operas. Media has also brought about an information rich generation that has the option to choose from all the varieties displayed before them. Everything today is available from movies, music, food, games, sex, and fashion at the click of a button. Easy exposure to illicit materials at a young age with no legal systems and moral standards to keep them accountable will have an adverse psycho-social-emotional effect on the growing generation. With more working parents working long hours, television, Internet, and mobile phones are replacing quality time and human interactions. Increased suicides among urban teens in

India are indeed an indication of the growing gap between parents and their children. Mobile phones have caused many a marriage breakdown with constant messages and phone calls keeping people from spending quality time with their family. Media and technology, which are intended to close the communication gap, in many ways do the reverse by increasing the gaps between family members.

### **Socioreligious and Political Context of Bangalore**

As this research focuses on the families living in Bangalore city (officially Bengaluru), which is the capital of the Indian state of Karnataka, to understand the culture of the city, its sociopolitical climate, and especially the religious mood of the city is helpful. As mentioned in the first chapter, the establishment of the Bangalore cantonment brought in a large numbers of migrants to Bangalore from other parts of the country. Hence, this city has people from different ethnicities, cultures, and languages. The synthesis of many cultures has given the city a cosmopolitan character seen in few other cities of India. Known for its pleasant climate, it became the destination for many multinational firms from various parts of the world. All these factors have increased the population of Bangalore more than 25 percent in the last decade and have brought in people from all other states and other countries into the city. English dominates this city as an internationally hegemonic language in the commercial, financial, and scientific or IT fields (Nair 242). Hindi and Tamil dominate in the cultural spheres, which has brought about much protest by the local language (Kannada) activists and was instrumental in changing the name of the city from Bangalore to its Kannada version *Bengaluru*.

## **City Culture and Social Life**

The city culture and social life is different from many other cities of India. The city culture and social life is more youthful due to the many young people who flood the city.

**Youth culture.** Home to some of the well-recognized colleges and research institutions in India, the city attracts students from all over India, and this influx of students contributes to the youthfulness of the city. The city has many things to offer the young, starting with pubs, nightlife, quick getaways, and big shopping malls to thriving arts and entertainment scenes from the Indian classics. Bangalore is also the pub capital of India with maximum number of pubs compared to any Indian cities. With many Information Technology companies operating in Bangalore, professionals whose average age is below twenty five years fill the city.

**Residences.** With increasing migration to the city, many high-rise apartments and flats have mushroomed in the last decade. People stay in rented or owned apartments, and rich or early settlers usually own independent homes. People from lower middle-class backgrounds stay in narrow crowded streets with lower house rents and minimum infrastructure. Usually they live in one or two room houses that are closely attached to each other; however, such close by apartments facilitates greater interactions with their neighbors. Students who come from outside the state share rooms to reduce their expenses.

**Infrastructure and traffic.** With the city infrastructure not adequately equipped to face the sudden increase in population, the city traffic is highly congested. In peak traffic hours, a small distance of even two or three kilometers takes more than an hour to

cover. Many of the commuters spend two to four hours every day on the road, often causing regular road rages in the city. Any outing within the city is a frustrating experience especially in peak hours. A great deal of infrastructure work has begun to beat traffic congestion, which hopefully will ease the situation in the future. Traffic has restricted many weekday meetings and social visits. Any church meetings on weekdays show a sharp decline in attendance. People spend weekends often on personal work. Malls and other entertainment avenues are generally crowded on the weekends.

### **Socioeconomic Factors and Their Effect on Families**

The social factors discussed above and those changes have greatly affected families. The economic growth of the city, though, has given rise to new buildings, new infrastructure, and other facilities, but the growth is not without its negative effects. On 16 December 2008, the *Times of India* reported on the increase in divorce rates in Bangalore city:

The divorce rate in Bangalore has risen by an astonishing 30% in a short, three-year span. From 2,493 in 2005 to 3,243 this year, divorce filings before the family court are registering growth rates that would be the envy of any IT/BPO company. Incidentally, most of the cases do pertain to couples employed in Bangalore's tech industry. (Das 1)

The report quotes lawyers speaking about the factors that lead to divorce: "While financial security is one factor, erratic working hours, work pressures, stress, all contribute to marital discord. Many professionals in IT/BPO sector find it difficult to strike work-life balance which impacts marriages negatively." (1) An unbalanced life has adverse effect on a marriage relationship, and it also affects children as they hardly get to see their parents.

The increase in divorce rates, especially among the IT professionals, the growing suicides rates in the city, the growing promiscuity among the young call center

employees, and many other related issues such as abortions, domestic violence, AIDS, alcoholism, drug culture, pornography, rave parties, increased number of emotional abnormalities, single parenting and teenage issues, have had a direct impact on families. Families have been at the receiving end of these changing patterns and have been going through the pain of these social changes in the city. What is more painful is the attitude of Indian families to keep things as private as possible or as a family affair. Dipannita Das says, “Sparring couples seek counselors’ help,” but Rinki Battacharya says, “In spite of these realities there is a conscious and an unconscious denial of the seriousness of this situation in Indian Society” (21). J. George in his article on changing family patterns in India says, “When a violent situation is reported the families attempt to explain the issue as a ‘family matter’ that outsiders should not be concerned about it” (32). This taboo of seeking outside help has made many Indians cope with pain alone, and they take extreme steps when they are unable to bear the pain of their family issues. The only way to connect to families and help them to open up is to become an insider. Christian families need to establish family relationships with their neighbors to become an insider. When they make their homes open to others, then the neighbors also will open up. To become an insider is the way forward to connect to people’s felt needs in the city of Bangalore.

### **Politics and Religion in the City**

In India politics was always kept away from religion till the last two decades, but with the growth of Hindu and Muslim fundamentalism, political parties have emerged that have polarized the community based on religion. These religion-based politics had not affected South India until a decade ago. Over a decade now, well-organized campaigns and indoctrination has led to these political parties forming deep roots in the



South. Bangalore, the capital of the state of Karnataka, is the first state in which the Hindu religious fundamentalist party has won the recent election in the year 2008 with an absolute majority. The party's name is Bharatiya Janatha Party, and their philosophy is called *Hindutva*. The *Hindutva* philosophy believes that India belongs to the Hindus, and all Indians should respect and abide by the Hindu philosophies if they desire to live in India. They are organized into a cultural wing, a political wing, a religious wing, and a militant wing. They have brought many restrictions to the religious freedom of all other religions; and their militant wing, the Bajrang Dal; their cultural wing, the Rashtriya Swayam Sevak ; and their religious wing, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), even trains people in martial arts to attack other religious establishment that are considered a threat to Hinduism. They carry out these attacks in the pretext of preserving the Indian culture and religion.

In the last two years, the attacks on Christians in India, especially in the states ruled by the BJP government, have been innumerable. Hinduism, known for its pantheistic ideology, is a tolerant religion, but such continuous indoctrination by Hindu fundamentalists has religiously polarized people in every city, including the city of Bangalore. The word *conversion* is a popular word now, and many Hindus view all Christian activities in any organized form as an attempt at conversion. "Conversion and Christian missionaries are a threat to India," a leader of a radical Hindu group told reporters. He also added, "My message to Christians in India is—stop your conversion" (S. George 1). These indoctrinations along with media controlled by many of the Hindu leaders have made attempts for evangelism and church planting difficult. Any attempts to connect to people on a religious platform have become more difficult than ever. Hindu

activists use cyberspace effectively to consolidate all Christian materials including several researched PhD dissertations on church-planting movements in India. For example, [www.crusadewatch.org](http://www.crusadewatch.org) has full pdfs of many of the doctoral dissertations on church-planting movements in India. Continuous updates based on lies and twisted facts reach many tech-savvy Hindus and promote hate campaigns against Christians. Christian groups in various places have now begun to emerge united due to the recent violent attacks on Christians under different banners.

Sajan George, who heads one such united forum in India, has released a magazine called *India Persecution Update*, which covers horrendous pictures and details of the Christian persecution in India. Bangalore, the headquarters of many mission organizations, houses some of the old cathedrals and churches, witnessed for the first time such atrocities against Christians in the recent past. Sadly not many Hindus are sympathetic to the atrocities against the Christians. In a television poll of a news channel that I watched during the attacks on Christians in Orissa in August 2008, more than 90 percent of the voters felt that the attacks against Christians are due to their conversion agenda. Most of the Hindus see Christianity as a religion of the West, and they see the evangelization agenda as a Western agenda that gets financial support from Western churches and mission agencies. The politicization of religion in India has created a clear religious polarization that makes formal and organized attempts to share the Christian faith difficult in Indian cities. In spite of these difficult times in the city now, the Church in the city of Bangalore has remained largely calm but has become cautious in all activities. Many churches called off their caroling rounds for Christmas, when the choirs visit church members at midnight to sing Christmas carols, fearing attacks by Hindu

fundamentalists. The situation is unfortunate, but it is part of the call to be his disciples.

A brief look at Christianity in the city will help in understanding the influence of the Church and its role in bringing city transformation.

### **Christianity in Bangalore City**

As Christ has called his children to be the salt of the earth, though Christians are a small percentage in the city of Bangalore, Christians have made remarkable contributions to the city in terms of hospitals, schools, and colleges. In Bangalore, Christians constitute 5.7 percent of a population of around 6.5 million as per the 2001 census (“Population”).

The major landmark road of the city is the M. G. Road. This road starts with an old cathedral and ends with another old cathedral. The British during their reign constructed churches, schools, and hospitals that continue as well-known landmarks of the city.

Consequently, in the prominent historical landmarks of the city, many churches built during the British reign also play a part. Christians run some of the major charity hospitals. People still consider Christian schools and convents as the best places of education and inculcation of good values. Though many Hindu mission hospitals and schools have sprung up in the recent past, Christian schools and hospitals continue to exert a larger influence on society. Christian families have lived in harmony with their neighbors, and most evangelistic efforts have happened through organized programs of the church or Christian organizations. Many older generation Hindus in the city continue to respect Christians because of the education they have received from one of the old Christian schools. With the new aggression of Hinduism, some of them have turned their thoughts against Christians and have begun to view Christian work with suspicion.

In spite of the changing hostile context of the city, what helps the body of Christ to move on is the understanding of the mission of God. The mission of God is unstoppable, and he will establish his kingdom through all these painful trials. The missional God is indeed looking for missional homes through which God can fulfill his mission on earth.

The following section explains the methodology to accomplish this research.

### **Research Methodology**

This research is an explorative study on missional families from the city of Bangalore utilizing a qualitative research method. As this research is to understand the phenomena behind the rationale of missional families, I used a qualitative methodology instead of a quantitative method. One needs to view the phenomena that make the family missional in a holistic way because one cannot reduce complex phenomena to a few factors or partitioned into independent parts. The perceptions of the research participants are important, and to the extent possible, one needs to capture these perceptions in order to obtain an accurate measure of their reality. As a researcher, I do not impose meaning on these perceptions, but the people I chose to study understand the meaning of their perception or experiences. In the qualitative method, assumptions and conclusions are subject to change as the research proceeds (Wiersma and Jurs 201). Hence, in the context of this research, to understand how Christian families can use their home intentionally for missional purpose, to interview couples who have been intentional in fulfilling their missional purpose through their home would be important. An inquiry into their vision, their purpose, their familial bonding, their relationship with God, and their use of their home to reach their neighbors and friends helps this research to achieve its purpose. The

avenue of inquiry best suited for this study is the in-depth phenomenological interview method (Seidman 9). The method is a series in-depth interviewing method, which I have explained in detail in the section below. The interviewing method requires conceptualizing, establishing access, making contact with participants, interviewing them, transcribing the data, and working with the material (6). I used two ways to collect qualitative data: (1) participant observation and (2) a researcher-designed in-depth series interview protocol. In a qualitative methodology, the researcher operates in a natural setting because of the concern for the context and, to the extent possible, should maintain openness about what I observe, collect, etc. in order to avoid missing something important (Wiersma and Jurs 201). In this study, I participated in the selection and interviewing of the couples. I remained a keen observer during the interview and maintained field notes to record my thoughts, feelings, and observations throughout the data collecting process.

Following the in-depth phenomenological interviewing method, I conducted the interview. The interview is an in-depth series interview, and I have described the method in detail in Chapter 3.

### **Conclusion**

Family is the basic unit in every society. The strength of the families determines the strength of the society. In this chapter I discussed how household evangelism, household conversion, household baptisms, and household churches have been quite prominent aspects in the New Testament era. Christian homes were an important and integral factor in the spread of Christianity throughout the Greco-Roman empire. Both Jesus and his disciples used homes effectively to accomplish their mission.

The five characteristics of missional homes derived from various authors on the missional church are a good tool to evaluate the mission pursuit of Christian families today. In the early Church missional homes later transformed into meeting centers and eventually became house churches. The sacred space that was earlier the temple had shifted to people's homes. The home became the mission center among the early Christians. The use of the missional homes by the missional God from beginning of creation is noteworthy.

Not only the outreach efforts of the missional homes made a great missional impact but also the household ethics and codes governing the people who stayed in the homes made an impact. Thus, the witness of the family was an overflow of their witness at home. The unique characteristics of the missional homes give insights into their hospitality, their lifestyle, and their concern for the society. The model of Cornelius's family serves as a good model of how families can be intentional in connecting to different strata of people by making good use of one's position and possessions.

Household salvation and its implications for Indian families also drive home the need to connect more to families than just individuals. Family connections and contacts have deeper impacts than individuals do as they influence the household.

The growing family issues due to the changing family patterns and the increase in divorce and family suicides is indeed a great need and concern of urban Indian society. Using the current situation to connect to the needs of urban Indians is how to address the need of the hour. The accompanying situation of a growing hostility toward Christians in India leaves Christians with few options. To connect empathetically to the felt needs of the society is the best option I can think of. Hence, this research is crucial in exploring

the challenges and opportunities that Christian missional families in Bangalore have before them in being the presence of God in the community.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this research was to explore the motivation, strategies, and challenges that missional families face in the city of Bangalore, India. This qualitative study explores the opportunities and challenges faced by Christian families who are already engaged in missional activities by both lifestyle and works in the city of Bangalore. Chapter 3 reviews the research design employed in this study.

#### **Research Questions**

The research questions guiding this study are as follows.

##### **Research Question #1**

What motivated the participants to be missional families?

This research question seeks to learn the various influences that the family faced to become missional. Their own context and background play a role in their decision to be missional. Exploring their world from their past threw some insight into their real motivation to be missional families. My first interview and third interview (see Appendixes C and E) focused on the motivation of the missional families. I asked certain questions to understand their motivation, which covered all the five areas of missional families. In the first interview, I asked questions on the *how* aspect of their lives, which brought out their influences and background. To understand their motivation to be a worshipping family, I asked questions such as, “How was the pattern of family worship in your home of origin?” To know their motivation on what makes them a loving family, I asked questions such as, “How was your parents’ relationship with you as you grew



up?” Similarly I asked the *how* questions to understand their motivation to be incarnational, attractional, and nurturing as a family. The questions asked helps to look at all their positive influence that makes them missional families. In the third interview, I asked questions that helped them reflect the meaning of their experience, which also helped me understand their motivation. I asked questions such as “What is the real purpose of your family worship?” or, “Why do you keep your home open?” which brought out the purpose behind their actions. Understanding their motivations throws more light into this study and provides important information to produce missional families in the city.

## **Research Question #2**

What specific strategies do these missional families adopt to fulfill their missional purpose in order to affect their neighborhood, and what are its effects?

The main purpose of this research question is to explore the variety of ways Christian families have become intentional in fulfilling their missional purpose both inside and outside of home. This question explores what families intentionally do to connect to their extended families and friends beyond their own Christian community and to their neighborhood. My second interview ( see Appendix D) which focuses on details of their experience, helped me to understand many of their methods used to reach others. To bring out the answer to this research question, I asked them to share their experiences on each of the five aspects of the missional family. To know the methods used to be a worshipping family, I asked questions such as, “Can you share specifically about how you conduct family worship?” To know the methods by which they incarnate Christ into others’ lives, I asked questions such as, “Can you narrate some incidents of reaching

people outside your home with the love of Christ?” To know the methods of nurture I asked them, “Can you share what specific methods and tools you use to nurture others?” (Appendix D) Such questions threw light on different workable strategies in reaching one’s neighbors, relatives, and friends. This research question asks about perceived strengths and weaknesses of the methods employed and inquires about feedback from the neighbors. For example, when I asked the missional families to share about any attempts made by them to connect to their extended families, I specifically asked them to share both *successful* and *unsuccessful* stories. The question also gives me insight into the repercussions (if any) the family had to face in their attempts to be missional. Their regretful stories and their joyful stories also give insight into the way others perceive the attempts of Christian families to be missional.

### **Research Question #3**

What challenges have Christian families experienced or what fears do they have related to being missional families?

This question seeks to understand the fears and challenges that participants faced in their attempt to fulfill their missional mandate. I used my second interview ( see Appendix D) to know about their struggles, challenges, and fears, and I used the third interview (see Appendix E) to focus on finding their perspective to these struggles and challenges. For example, to know the struggles a family face in order to keep the family worship going, I asked question such as, “What are some of the struggles or challenges that you have faced to worship the Lord as a family?” I asked similar questions pertaining to all five characteristics of a missional family. To understand the challenges in nurturing families, I asked specific questions such as, “What are some of the challenges that you

faced in mentoring and nurturing people?” Specifically, this research question also investigates how satisfied the families are in living out their missional purposes. Hence, in interview three where I asked them questions to reflect on the meaning of their experience, I asked questions such as, “In what way are you satisfied with the way you have engaged in sharing Christ to others?” Similarly, I asked questions in all the five areas of a missional family to understand their perspective towards their challenges. Hence, the third research question helps the research in understanding the struggles each family faces and the families’ attitude towards their struggles.

### **Participants**

In this qualitative study, I used a purposeful sampling strategy to identify seven missional couples. Participating couples had to meet the following selection criteria: (1) The couples had to be missional couples as per the definition of missional families in Chapters 1 and 2. (2) the couple had to be in the city of Bangalore for a minimum of three years. (3) they should be of Indian origin. (4) of the seven, a minimum of three couples had both partners work outside of home, and the rest with one partner working outside of home; and, (5) the couples had to be married in the range of five to thirty-five years. I chose the following steps in choosing the participants.

First, I approached three mission leaders and three pastors from three different church backgrounds who are friends of Urban India Ministries. These are leaders of repute in the city of Bangalore.

Second, I briefed these leaders about the study and explained to them the five characteristics of a missional family that served as selection criteria.

Third, I asked the pastors and leaders to suggest a minimum of four names of missional couples of Indian origin. Of the four, I requested them to give two who were married for more than five years but less than fifteen years (I will refer to them as young couples) and the other two who are married for more than fifteen years but less than thirty-five years (I will refer to them as senior couples).

Fourth, pastors secured the couples' permission to share their contact information with me.

Fifth, I e-mailed an informed consent form (see Appendix F) and a questionnaire (see Appendix A) to participants. I subsequently followed up with telephone reminders requesting that they complete the survey.

Sixth, after reviewing the completed questionnaires, I contacted the couples who matched my criteria by phone, and they participated in a mini phone interview for fifteen minutes to confirm the details (see Appendix B). The purpose here is to begin to build rapport and further screen the couples.

Seventh, based on the interview, I selected seven couples with a minimum of three senior couples for the study. The selection of the seven was based on (1) couples who exhibited maximum of the five attributes of missional family, (2) couples who were both involved together in their missional pursuit (though the involvement of one spouse was sometimes less than the other, I only selected cases where both were involved in at least in some measure in the mission), and (3) passionate couples for the Lord who made many attempts to reach their neighborhood (both successful and unsuccessful).

### **Design of the Study**

This research is an explorative study utilizing a qualitative research method. In this research methodology, one needs to view phenomena holistically, and one cannot reduce complex phenomena to a few factors or partition them into independent parts. The perceptions of those under study are important and to the extent possible, in order to obtain an accurate measure of their reality, one needs to capture these perceptions. Instead of the researcher imposing meanings on people's experience, those being studied are the ones who need to make meanings of their experience and perceptions. In a qualitative method, assumptions and conclusions are subject to change as the research proceeds (Wiersma and Jurs 201). Hence, in the context of this research to understand how Christian families can use their homes intentionally for a missional purpose, I interviewed both the partners who have been intentional in fulfilling their missional purpose. An inquiry into their vision, their purpose, their familial bonding, their relationship with God, and their use of their home to reach their neighbors and friends helps this research to achieve its purpose. The avenue of inquiry that was best suited for this study is the in-depth phenomenological interview method (Seidman 9). The method consists of a series of in-depth interviews, which I have explained in detail in the section below. This interviewing method requires conceptualizing, establishing access and contacting participants, interviewing them, transcribing the data, and working with the material (6). I used two ways to collect qualitative data: (1) participant observation and (2) a researcher-designed in-depth series interview protocol.

## **Participant Observation**

In a qualitative methodology, the researcher operates in a natural setting because of the concern for the context, and, to the extent possible, one has to be open to observation and to the collected material in order to avoid missing something important (Wiersma and Jurs 201). In this study, I participated in the selection and in the interviewing of the couples. I personally wanted to make sure that I was interviewing the right participant. Because some of the participants were less known to me, I had to establish rapport over the telephone and in person to find the suitable time and place for the interview. I was a keen observer during the interview. I made note of their discomforts, their *ifs* and *buts*, their life stories, and the involvement of both the husband and wife or just one in answering the questions, and recorded everything in my field notes. The field notes became a rich written account of my own thoughts, feelings, and observations throughout the data collecting process.

## **Instrumentation—A Researcher-Designed, Three Series In-Depth Interview**

### **Protocol**

The interview method that I chose for this research is an in-depth phenomenological interviewing method, which is an in-depth series of three interviews. In qualitative analysis the researcher cannot be detached from the research as the research is context specific (Wiersma and Jurs 14). Thus, the interviewer is one of the instruments (Seidman 16). Therefore, the researchers' perspectives highly influence the data collection and analyses in qualitative research. Irving Siedman quotes Lincoln and Cuba to show the benefit of human instruments: "Rather than decrying the fact that the instrument used to gather data affects this process, we say the human interviewer can be a

marvelously smart, adaptable, flexible instrument who can respond to situation and skill with skill, tact and understanding” (16). Hence, the researcher as a human instrument can be both at an advantage and a disadvantage based on one’s skill, tact, and understanding.

The researcher always brings some bias and thoughts into the research because of the researcher’s own background. I am aware of my own bias and understanding of missional family. My position as the director of Urban India Ministries (a family ministry organization focused on transforming cities through homes), my family orientation, my background, and education play a crucial role in my understanding of a missional family. I have derived the five criteria for a missional family from my readings on missional church. As I strongly desired to use family as a platform for evangelism in India, I have done much thinking and teaching through UIM. The main theme of the three-module camp conducted by Urban India Ministries is “Being a missional family”. This module is for couples who want to use their home as a mission center. I have even tried out some ideas to connect intentionally with my neighborhood using my own home. Therefore, I realized the need to be careful in not allowing my own thoughts and bias to influence the research. Being a missional family in the same context of Bangalore in which I conducted the research, I also have my perception about the challenges, barriers, and opportunities to being a missional home. These perceptions were both helpful and restrictive. The tendency to jump to conclusions was high, especially in the case when couples were narrating experiences similar to that of mine. In such cases, I consciously avoided drawing conclusions, and instead I probed further with questions such as “Can you explain this further?” or “Can you narrate that experience more?” My own knowledge of the situation also helped me to identify with the participant and further probe into the area

of my research; however, I conducted pilot interviews with two known families to evaluate my own biases using interview questionnaires before interviewing the chosen families.

### **Pilot Test**

I conducted a pilot test with one family in order to make sure the interview questionnaire would help me achieve the object of my research. Part of the qualitative research is the adjustment of the interview protocol based on experience and analysis of the pilot test. I had to reorganize, and I added few more questions to the interview protocol based on the interview of my pilot study. This helped me to validate the questionnaire.

### **Data Collection**

As an exploratory study, I chose an extensive in-depth phenomenological interviewing method that utilized qualitative research (Seidman 9). This interviewing method as propagated by Seidman and his colleagues combines life history interviewing and focused, in-depth interviewing informed by assumptions drawn from phenomenology (9). The interview primarily used open-ended questions. The goal is to have the participants reconstruct their responses within the topic under study. Hence, this method helps to bring out the concrete experiences of people in missional families and the meaning their experiences had for them. The purpose of the interviews was to learn about the experience of different people and the meanings they make out of their experiences, that is, the participants' attempts to be missional families in different settings and context had their share of struggles, barriers, and opportunities.



During the period of October 2009 to January 2010, I conducted in-depth phenomenological interviews with seven couples. I interviewed each couple at three different time-periods. I set the time-periods according to their convenience. I scheduled each of the three interviews for 1 ½ hours, which in the case of couple 4. SD and 6. ON extended another twenty minutes because they had more stories about their experiences reaching people within their extended families. I conducted the three-phase interview with a gap of one week between the first, second, and third interviews. Both husband and wife participated in the interviews in their own home settings, which also helped me to visualize their experience. The couples had arranged to be undisturbed during the interviews by either putting the children to sleep or by switching off their mobile phones for that period. In Indian homes, people do not make prior appointments and surprise guests and visitors are normal. Thus, I conducted interviews of three couples after 9 p.m. to minimize the likelihood of unanticipated visitors.

Before the interview began, I instructed them to speak one at a time. It helped in transcribing verbatim with ease. The husbands and wives shared their views on every question, which also helped me to understand differences in opinion, perspective, and background issues of the couple. The first interview focused on the history of the couple, which included their home of origin, their background influences on being a missional family etc., and the second focused on the details of their experience as missional families. Open-ended questions helped them to provide detailed responses. As the interview progressed, I asked clarification questions to ensure that I understood them rightly. To verify if I had understood the intent of what was communicated I also summarized their statements and at times restated their comments. English is not my

mother tongue or that of the interviewee, hence, such clarification at times in regional languages also helped to verify the intended meaning. Since most of them were educated and could converse in English, I did not have to do the verification very often. However, while I transcribed, I made a few grammatical corrections to make sense of some statements, though care was taken to not distort the intended meaning. The third interview was primarily to reflect upon the meaning of the couple's experience as recommended by Seidman. In many cases, the couples reflected on the meaning as they were narrating their experience. For example when I had asked a couple to share details about their worshipping experience as a family, they not only shared their experience, but they said why they were engaged in worshipping as a family. Couples shared their desire to nurture their children in the Scriptures among other reasons. Because such reflections were spontaneous, I did not interrupt them, as I did not want them to lose their train of thought and continuity. I used those reflections while analyzing the data. In cases where they had explained the meaning of their experience in the previous interview, I did not revisit those areas, which made the third interview a little shorter than the other two.

### **Data Analysis**

I used a digital recorder for all the interviews and later downloaded the file onto my computer. My secretary transcribed the interviews into Word documents. Though I hired a person to transcribe the interviews verbatim, I also spent time listening to all the interviews as she typed. This process of listening to the interview back and forth along with the transcriber helped me to clarify things that were unclear to the transcriber, which ensured the accuracy of the transcriptions. I could also recap those interviewing moments, which helped me to feel the emotions and passion of the couples that I

interviewed. This procedure of transcribing was vital to my analysis. As I listened, some important themes and details of the study began to lodge in my mind, which helped me in my analysis.

Then I copied the transcriptions, and I gave them to two of my colleagues. I explained to them the fivefold characteristics of a missional family. As I had focused my questions on motivation, methods, challenges, and impacts, I had asked them to categorize the data into motivation, methods, challenges, and impacts on all the five aspects of missional family so I could easily group them. To each of these categories, I assigned a color and used a color pen to mark the same. The color scheme helped me to identify the category during my analysis. I spent a considerable amount of time with my colleagues to categorize the data, as some of the data needed a great deal of discussion and reflection before I put them into a particular category. I decided on the category only when my colleagues and I found consensus. Though I found this exercise exhaustive and time consuming, it gave greater validity to the category assigned. Though my colleagues were involved in categorizing the data, they were not involved in its final analysis or its interpretation. Here I should note that to maintain confidentiality of the participants, I gave the names of the interviewee as codes to my colleagues. Once we coded into categories of motivation, methods, challenges and impact, corresponding themes and patterns of missional families emerged.

When I assimilated and grouped together the motivational aspect of missional families, I observed common patterns in all the families. Similarly, when I grouped the methods together, I observed some methods and patterns common to all the families. In

the same way, I grouped all the challenges and impacts and observed patterns similar to all the missional families that I had selected.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Any sound research is a moral and ethical endeavor; therefore, every effort to protect the interest of the participants should be the concern of the researcher. Hence, as I conducted this study on missional families, the mission leader or pastor who suggested the names of the missional families took oral consent from the couples that they thought were missional. Once I received the consent from the pastor to interact with the participants through e-mail and telephone, I sent the informed consent form to all twenty-four participants (see Appendix F). I followed up with a phone call explaining the consent form to each participant. The participants who agreed to participate in the research sent the informed consent by e-mail.

To maintain anonymity, I did not use any names but assigned code numbers and always referred the families only by code numbers. To maintain the confidentiality of the information shared by the participants, I preserved the wave data in my computer system protected by a password. Wherever I quoted a participant, I only mentioned them by code numbers. I made sure I did not disclose in any way any sensitive information shared by the participants, unless they gave me permission to do so, without mention of names. As missional families revealed their strategies to reach people for Christ, I made sure that I avoided even details of location or any other revealing form of identification. Therefore, I took all possible care to ensure that the participants did not undergo any harm in any form.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Problem and Purpose**

The purpose of the study to explore the motivation, strategies, and challenges of missional families in the city of Bangalore was accomplished using dissertation instrumentation such as interviews, field notes, and questionnaires. This chapter explains the findings of the research questions based on the data collection and analysis as explained in Chapter 3. Research question 1 helped me to see the major themes that motivated the families to be missional, and I have listed and have elaborated on the same in this chapter. Research question 2 examines the common methods used by all the missional families under study in fulfilling all five areas mentioned in the literature review as a requirement for a missional family. The third research question examines the major challenges faced by missional families in fulfilling the fivefold criteria of a missional family. I examined all five criteria of missional families in each of the families, and the most common motivations, methods and challenges are the only ones I have highlighted in the findings. I also had some surprise additional findings, which I discuss in Chapter 5.

#### **Participant Profile**

All of the interviewees are from the city of Bangalore and have resided in the city for more than five years, and they were from various parts of the city. Table 4.1 explains the demographics of the participants.

Most of the participants that I interviewed have lived as a family in Bangalore from the time they were married. Except for couples 5. BP and 1. KB, most of them

started their family life in Bangalore. Even the ones who came from outside Bangalore have lived in the city for the major part of their family life. Couples 1. KB, 2. UE, and 3. 19 were married for more than fifteen years, and the other four were married less than 15 years but longer than eight years of marriage. All of them have children. Couple 8. SB had adopted a child recently after many years of waiting for their own child. The couples who were married for less than fifteen years have children who are not yet adolescents. Of the three senior couples (1-3 in table 3.1), one couple (2. UE) has become empty nesters with all three children married and settled in different places. The second senior couple has one married daughter and two grown up young adults staying in their home. Though one of their sons is financially independent, he stays at home. (In India, most children stay with their parents until they get married while some stay with parents even after their marriage.) The third senior couple has two children who are a young adult and teenager.

The participants are from various professional backgrounds. Of the seven couples, three of them are in full-time ministry, and the other four are professionals working in a secular environment. Of the three full-time ministers, all of whom are male, one of their spouses is a practicing dentist, and the other two are engaged in assisting in their husband's ministry in a volunteer capacity. The other four couples are doctors, engineers, professors, and a scientist. They all have well-recognized positions in their society. In two homes (2. UE, 3. SR), both men and women work outside their home for a living, and in three homes the women do not work outside of the home though all of them are well qualified (1. KB, 4. SD, 6. ON ) and had been working outside until they had

children. In two other homes (5. BP, 7. SB), women have chosen part-time jobs to allow them to spend more time at home with children and remain in touch with their profession.

Economically, all of them are salaried except one pastor who has a home church, and most of them would fall into the middle class or upper middle class. The annual income for the middle-class and upper middle-class families would range anywhere between five hundred thousand to ten hundred thousand rupees which is approximately equivalent to 12,000 USD to 22,000 USD per annum. Though this figure is not large when compared to the United States or other developed countries, this amount is sufficient to survive with ease in the Indian cities for an average family of four to five members. Though some couples had gone through financial constraints at some point in their lives, none of them was facing any major financial issues or problems at the time of their interviews.

**Table 4.1. Participant Profiles**

No. and Code	Yrs. in Bangalore as Family/ Yrs. Married	Professions	Church Background	Both Work Outside the Home	Children with Details	Residence
1. KB	20/30	Pastor (full-time ministry) and homemaker	Methodist	No	Three (1 married and 2 young adults)	Independent home in mission compound
2. UE	31/31	Evangelist and doctor	Brethren	Yes	3 married daughters	Independent house in a colony
3. SR	19 /19	Both are scientist	Independent house church	No	2 daughters (teen and young adult)	Independent house but in a crowded area
4. SD	13/13	Pastor and homemaker	Independent house church	No	3 sons (12, 9, and 6)	Rented apartment
5. BP	8 /10	Both are doctors	Baptist	Yes (wife works part- time)	2 children (8 and 6)	Hospital quarters
6. ON	8/8	Software engineer and homemaker	Evangelical free church	No	2 children (7 and 3)	Apartment with 15 families
7. SB	13/13	Engineer/ Professor	Mar Thoma	Yes (wife works part time)	1 adopted child (1 year old)	Apartments of 60 families

### Research Question 1 Analysis

The first research question explored the factors that influenced the family to be missional. During the interviews, when I asked questions focused on the life history of the couples, they gave me many valuable insights to their outward focus as a family. The open-ended questions during the interview brought to light the various influences that each of them had from their family life, involvement with mission organizations, and other motivational factors in being a missional family.

When I looked at all the factors that motivate the families to be missional, four important aspects play a major role in motivating the missional families. They are strong influences from their own background, their strong faith and beliefs, some incidents that



has influenced them, and their own aspirations. However, when I looked at each of the five criteria of missional family identified in the literature review, namely worshipping family, loving family, incarnational family, attractional family, and nurturing family, I found six major themes evolving as motivation for the missional families under study. They are (1) being influenced by the home of origin, spouse, and other families, (2) sensing God's call and feeling a burden to make Christ known as a family, (3) understanding and experiencing God, (4) understanding home as a place of ministry, (5) desiring to leave a godly legacy, and (6) wanting to be a blessing to others by keeping themselves available. To refer to participant couples in this chapter, I use the number codes listed in Table 4.1.

### **Being Influenced by Home of Origin, Spouse, and Other Families**

This theme relates to the degree to which others modeled what a missional family looked like in such a way that at some point in their life, participants were the recipients of care from a missional family. In this way the influence of home of origin, spouse, and other families affected participants' later choice to become a missional family.

The first theme that influenced participants' decision to become a missional family was the early impact of their home of origin. All seven families acknowledged that their home played a strong influence in their lives. Of the seven couples, three of them came from homes where both their parents were mission oriented, and the other four had at least one partner whose parents were mission oriented. I noticed that the people who came from homes of strong spiritual influence also had a spiritual influence upon their spouse. Consequently, their upbringing and their home of origin had an influence on the marital family to be missional. Many of them even attributed their

spiritual nurture and blessings to the spiritual discipline in their parents' home. Family worship was a compulsory ritual in many of their parents' home. Two couples openly acknowledged that they did not enjoy family worship when they were children, but attributed the discipline of their parents seeking God as a reason for their blessings today. One senior couple who is a mission leader stated the following:

In my home it was compulsory, whether we liked it not. Dad prayed. We will simply listen. Even if we forgo meals, they will not forgo family prayer. For them, that was the best they could give us. I think they stood on their knees for us and that's what we are.

I heard similar comments from all the couples who came from homes that had strong spiritual backgrounds. Another individual stated, "All of us have to sit together for the family altar when we were growing up in our home. This is something we have inherited from our parents. Morning could be optional, but evening was compulsory."

Except for two couples who had partners from a Hindu and catholic background respectively, all of them had regular family altar as a compulsory discipline. However, their spouses came from homes that had a strong Christian influence. The influence of the home of origin has a strong influence in making them a worshipping family, which is first criteria of a missional family.

The strong love relationship exhibited between their parents also influenced some couples. In a few homes parents shared such strong relationship that a participant (3. UE) said that she has never seen any serious conflicts in their parent's relationships. Pastor 1. KB shared about his parents, "They are very close; they have never fought before us," and his wife shared how her dad was close to her mum. She said, "Though we know they did not match intellectually, my dad was constantly reassuring and declaring his love for her verbally." Many couples mentioned that in tough times they have seen their parents

stand together. Hence, such strong bonding between parents works as a great motivation for these missional families to love one another, which is the second criterion for a missional family. However, few came from homes that had contemporary relationship issues unlike what younger Indian couples face today. The parents of some of the interview couples came from a traditional patriarchal family system where women had a second place. One of the husbands (6. ON) when sharing about his family background said the following about his home of origin:

My father decided everything in my home including the dish to prepare for dinner. He brought home vegetables or meat products accordingly to his decisions. He even decided the political party that we should vote as a family. My mother unquestionably adhered to it.

However, his spouse came from a home where she witnessed complementary relationship between her parents, and she was able to influence her husband who had not seen this pattern in his own home. Therefore, while the good examples of parents were highly motivational for some to love one another, the negative examples of parents also became motivation for a few couples to not pursue such a model and instead be a loving family (a criterion for missional family). One wife said with strong emotion, “I did not see love in my home as we are experiencing love between us. There used to be constant fights, and in fact I did not want my husband to be like my father.”

To my question about what motivated them to be incarnational, one wife who is also a pastor’s daughter (2. UE), shared her childhood experience of seeing her dad going to colleges and inviting the students home for Bible study. She said, “I went to all the rooms, and we had hostel prayers, and those experiences with my dad have been my motivation.”

Another participant mentioned with passion how her dad was her spiritual mentor. She said, “My dad’s behavior, ethics, role model, code of conduct, teaching, etc. played a major role in nurturing me.” She recollected her dad nurturing her with much passion, which showed undoubtedly her motivation to nurture her own children and others, which is the fifth criterion for a missional family (nurturing family). Though all the five criteria of a missional home were not seen in many of their own homes of origin, most of the couples have derived a significant influence from their home of origin to be a missional family. Family worship, which almost forms the hub of all the activities of all the missional families interviewed, has been a direct influence from their home of origin.

A second motivation, especially for a few of the young couples, was other model families. In addition to their parents, other Christian families who had open homes for others as a missional family also had influenced the young couples in this sample. For example, a pastor’s family influenced a participant who had originally come from a Hindu background (6. ON):

My pastor’s family was a great help to me, and he was available even at the middle of the night. I have gone to his home and have spent time in the night, and they were willing to sacrifice their sleep till 2 to 3 in the night. They were available for me, and I also wanted to be like that when I get married.

This quote illustrates the way that one family (the pastor’s family) modeled being missional to this participant and influenced the couple to subsequently adopt this way of life for themselves. A colleague who started a prayer cell in their office motivated the scientist couple (3. SR), and it influenced their spiritual growth. This initiative by their colleague was the starting point for them to seek Christ more. The husband said, “If someone from a Hindu background could be so prayerful, how much could I be, and that

challenged me to discipline our family worship and also reach others.” Then the same colleague also initiated a Bible study in the couple’s home. Thus, other model families had an impact in some to become missional families.

Spouses provided a third motivational force for becoming a missional family, that is to say, the motivation came because of one spouse influencing the other. For example, a wife disclosed, “I was not a very open person, but after I got married to him, he was so open about everything that I decided to be an open person too. I share with him everything that happens to me.” Thus, one’s openness to her spouse motivated them to be a loving family, a criteria for missional families. I heard this aspect of being open repeatedly from all the couples in different ways. For example, one of the husbands said the following about his wife (7. SB):

I feel for me the greatest source of encouragement for me at a personal level is my spouse. God is No. 1, and my spouse is the No. 2. Many things, which I felt, I could not do, was achieved because of her encouragement.

Another participant wife who echoed similar sentiments (3. SR) said, “I would say that his involvement in spiritual matters definitely made the difference to where we are today, and I consider it a privilege to be married to him.” One of the wives (4. SD) mentioned how her husband also is her spiritual mentor. Therefore, spouses have played a motivational role through their love and openness, their mentoring and leadership in influencing their spouse to be missional. To see how one spouse can turn the other around and become a missional family was indeed a pleasant surprise.

### **Sensing God’s Call and Feeling a Burden to Make Christ Known**

The second theme that evolved was the sense of call and responsibility that each of these families felt about others who do not know Christ. They wanted to make Christ

known through their individual and family life. A sense of call, a burden for others, and their sensitivity to the Spirit of God's prompting also motivated these families to be missional. A strong sense of call from God and their responsibility to reach out to others was one of the common themes I observed as a motivation to be missional. One of the couples (6. ON) illustrated this theme when the husband said, "Because each of us are entrusted with the gospel, it's our duty to make him known." The doctor couple (5. BP) mentioned, "God has placed us to influence the medicos." A couple whose home invariably has someone either eating with them or staying with them said, "We wish all these people who come for our Bible studies will become strong believers and would respond fully to the gospel and not be seekers of only material benefits." The perspective of the scientist couple who said, "God has given us an opportunity to guide the young people and mentor them," really impressed me. He sees this opportunity as a privilege that God has given him. "To bring them as a disciple of Christ" is another motivation expressed by a family who wants to make disciples as commanded by Jesus Christ in the Great Commission. One of them also looked at his involvement in nurturing people from an eternal perspective when he said, "At the end of my life, I can tell the Lord that these are the people I have invested in." One rightly said that everything stems from the Great Commission to "Go and make disciples." Hence, the basis for motivation of all the couples to be missional is their sense of call and purpose from God to be his instrument in the place where God has planted them.

Feeling burdened about people's salvation also served as a motivational factor for families. I observed that the couples who came from homes that did not have strong Christian influence or from homes of other faiths had more zeal when compared to

families who came from homes where they had a spiritual heritage. A wife who came from a catholic family said, “I have prayed for all my relatives’ nonstop for two years to know the Lord.” One of the participants received an invitation to share Christ with a group of non-Christian students. She felt a great urge to speak first to her parents clearly about the salvation experience before she shared with others. Therefore, in haste she visited her parents and shared with them her faith and conviction and asked them to turn to Christ completely. Though the immediate outcome with her parents was not pleasant, she felt it broke the ice with her parents to discuss spiritual things later. Reflecting back on the incident she wondered if she could have waited for the right time. An engineer (6. ON) whose parents are Hindus truly desires to see his family saved, and he believes it could happen soon. Many of his siblings have already turned to Christ through them. Another wife, who comes from a nominal Christian home, carries a burden about her relatives: “I have been praying that God would not take away any of my relatives without knowing him.”

A spouse in one family whose immediate siblings have come to know the Lord said, “Many of my Christian relatives already claim to have relationship with God and sometimes it’s difficult to get a breakthrough. So we only share the gospel when we feel prompted to do so.” Some have attempted to reach their extended family members like cousins and uncles, though not all have been successful. Thus, the burden for their own family members to know Christ is a great motivation for many to be a missional family.

The promptings of the Spirit of God also served as a motivation for missional families. One of them shared how she felt burdened to pray for a particular family in her apartment building from a Brahmin background. Though she prays for all her neighbors,

she felt a special affinity and leading to pray for this particular family, and she has been doing it sincerely, believing she will see them come to faith in Jesus Christ. She felt prompted to pray for their child's salvation even before the child was born. Similarly, another wife shared how the Lord prompted her to share the gospel to her house cleaner one day, and her house cleaner committed her life to Christ. The same participant shared about a dream that made her pray for her aunt who later committed her life to Christ. Mission is indeed is the work of his Spirit, and missional families are motivated by such divine nudge to incarnate into people's lives. Some families feel a prompting to help physically by being with people in time of sickness or other crisis. Hence, prompted by the Spirit of God to fulfill God's mission served as a strong motivation to be missional for the participant families.

### **Understanding and Experiencing God**

Families interviewed had a deep relationship with God, and their experience and understanding of God evolved as a major theme toward their motivation to be missional. The families feel a sense of gratitude to God for who they are. In my third interview when I asked participants to reflect on their experience of family worship, one couple (8. SB) said, "We want to give all glory and honor to God, creator of our life; we owe it all to him." Most of them are motivated to be missional because of their indebtedness and gratitude toward God. A husband said, "God is the very reason for our life; it is he who chose us as husband and wife. We want to worship him and honor him. It's his grace that sustains us." Some of them even recollected their conversion experience such as the scientist couple (3.SR) whose wife said about her husband, "It's after his change that we started getting closer to God." The husband acknowledged by saying, "We have



experienced God in our life and that makes us to love others.” The husband also shared how he turned to Christ in a Christmas gathering by responding to God’s call. For this reason, this couple conducts every year a special Christmas program. They invite many young people for the program, and they share the gospel. His conversion experience serves as a strong motivation to be a missional family. Many of them shared significant experience of God’s provision, healing, and reconciliation in their life. Their response to God in gratitude also serves as a motivation for some families to be missional.

### **Understanding Home as a Sacred Place for Ministry**

Another theme that served as motivation to be missional by the families had to do with their beliefs or perspective in seeing their home as a sacred place of ministry. This understanding impacts all five criteria of a missional family and serves as a motivation for families to discipline their time with God as a worshipping family, their relationship with one another within one’s home (loving family), and it also motivates the families to open up their homes for others (incarnational, attractional, and nurturing family).

When asked why they keep their home open for others, “We want to exemplify the love of Christ in our home” was the desire that a participant wife (1. KB) expressed whose home I have known as a home for hospitality. Similarly, another senior couple (3. SR) said, “It’s the love of Christ that keeps my home open.” Another participant (7. SB) said, “It’s our desire for God, to serve Him and worship Him.” None of the couples sees their home as place only for them. They all have a larger picture of their home as a place of ministry. A professor (8. SB) who has used her home to minister to many of her students said, “We pray that people who come in to our home will not go without experiencing God.” Her prayer reflects her motivation to be missional. A husband who

strongly believes in the house church movement said, “I want my home to be mission base.” Hence, his home is always open, and they as a couple have influenced many young people through their home. His wife, who is passionate about using her home for Christ, shared, “I don’t mind staying up the whole night if someone needs to talk to me. I want my home to be a place that can make somebody better and they should see Christ in me.” Thus these families understand home as a place for ministry, and this perspective serves as a strong motivation to be missional.

### **Desiring to Leave a Godly Legacy**

A theme that dominated my analysis to understand the motivation of missional families had to do with their desire to reach their own children for Christ. None of them desires to lose their own at the cost of reaching others. I was really surprised that in the interview for my first question on family worship and its significance in their life, almost everyone started family worship as a needed discipline to nurture children. In two cases, I even had to stop and ask what significance family worship has for them as a couple. Only then did some realize that they had only focused their answer on their children. So leaving a godly legacy for their own children seems to be a strong motivation for many families to be missional. A participant (5. BP) who has kept their children’s names based on biblical characters said, “Our dream is they become what their name mean.” This act of intentionally naming their children shows the strong desire of missional families to impact their children for the kingdom. Being a role model parent is the desire of all the couples. A senior couple (1. KB) said, “Constantly we need to be on guard because the children are watching, and we need to practice before we preach.” Since children watch them in close quarters, parents desire to influence them by action. Thus, in repeated ways

couples mentioned their desire to be a model father and mother so that they could influence their own children. The doctor couple (5.BP) said, “I always tell our kids that my husband is my best friend. I want them to grow up with the idea of a life partner being a friend.”

The children are oriented by their parents not only on spiritual matters but also in matters of interpersonal relationships, in their attitude toward the poor and needy. A couple shared how they as a family drove past a place where prostitutes stand waiting for clients in Bangalore and used the occasion to discuss and teach their grown up children about treating human beings with dignity. Missional parents not only teach their children using words but also by their actions. A participant mentioned that “asking sorry to each other and to our own kids is never an effort.” Willingness to apologize to their children or to one another as a couple was a common feature in all the families, which aimed at teaching their children godly values. Therefore, nurturing their own children and their desire to influence and invest godly values in the lives of their own children serves as a motivation to be missional.

### **Wanting to Be a Blessing to Others by Keeping Themselves Available**

Another important motivation for the families to be missional is their desire to be a blessing to others by keeping themselves available for others. A common statement that all the families repeated in all the interviews is “we want to be available.” Two couples mentioned that they are open to share all that they have, which I believe reflects their heart for people. These families indeed want to use their home to reach others and are willing to bear the cost. A senior couple (2. UE) whose children are married and are presently empty nesters said, “Inclusion of others into our home only enriches and builds

our family life. It never destroys us as some fear.” The pastor couple (1. KB) feels that God has given both of them a heart of compassion to be a blessing to others. He also said, “To serve people in their time of need is not done with the intention to convert or even share the gospel, but it comes naturally to us.” A young couple said, “We want our lives to really count for God and to be a blessing to others.” All the couples are strongly motivated to be a blessing and have made many sacrifices such as giving their weekends to counsel and mentor young people, accommodating people by sacrificing their own privacy. I noticed one of the interviewee families I had visited for the interview, had given their master bedroom to a couple who had come for medical treatment for their child as they could not afford a room in the hospital. The guest family has been staying in that home for almost a month. It is a medium-sized apartment, and the host couple had been sleeping in their kid’s bedroom for over a month. The husband specially mentioned, “The Lord had enlarged our hearts for this kind of sharing.” The family went through a challenging time, but their motivation to be a blessing made themselves available for the family in need. Another interesting motivation I analyzed is the families’ love for people. Every family unequivocally mentioned their love for people, which comes from their love for God as a motivation. One couple shared, “It’s a joy to have people at home.” Another woman who gave up her career plans to spend more time with children and also be available for ministry at home said very strongly, “Wives staying at home can help in a big way” to minister through one’s home. In four families of the seven couples interviewed, keeping family and ministry as priority, one of the spouses had given up his or her career dreams and either has pursued a part-time job or has preferred to stay at home. One wife (3. SR), who has a career as a space scientist, mentioned that she would

like to take voluntary retirement to keep herself more available for her children and ministry. Therefore, a deep desire to be a blessing to others has been a great motivation to be missional. To keep themselves available for others, these families have gone the extra mile and have demonstrated by their actions in making sacrifices of career, time, and money.

### **Summary for Research Question #1 Analysis**

My inquiry into what made the participant families missional helped me to find keys that served as motivational forces for these families. What one's parents in their home of origin imparted has a deep influence in making many of these families missional. It proves the biblical principle of reaping what one sows. The missional couples's motivation is not limited to their own home, but it also comes from other model families and their own spouse. Secondly, influence needs to be backed by one's own experience of God and understanding of God and that also serves as a motivation for the families under study. Thirdly, the families are sensitive to the Spirit of God, thus their motivation comes by the prompting of the Spirit of God, which burdens them to reach others with an aim of making Christ known. Fourthly, their understanding of home as a sacred place of ministry motivated them to use their home for ministry. Fifthly, their own desire to see their children walking in the light of God motivates them to be missional families. Lastly, the families' desire to be a blessing to others has kept them available for others in need and has served as a strong motivation to be missional families. In the next section, I have discussed the methods these families adopted to fulfill all five criteria of missional families.

### **Research Question #2 Analysis**

The nature of research question 2 was to explore the various methods used by the missional families in order to keep themselves available to others. Since I chose these couples because they fulfilled all the five criteria of a missional family, I explored the various methods used by these families in all five areas. This research question helped me to discover various workable strategies that each of the families was using to fulfill their mission. I realized that each family had their own strong and weak areas, and their methods often reflected their strengths. I probed further into areas of their strengths and weaknesses, which helped me to understand their limitations in spite of their desire to do more. I heard stories of successes and failures that helped me to distinguish between the ideal and the practical. When I interviewed families regarding the extent to which some families were able to move out of their comfort zone for their love for God and his mission it truly took me by surprise. The common themes emerging as prominent methods used by missional families are the use of Word of God and prayer as the hub of all activities, family oneness and communication, use of every opportunity to connect with others, willingness to sacrifice for others need, hospitality and generosity is practiced, and their witness by life and word. The themes are not limited to what they did to reach people outside the home, but they also focus on what they did within their home that made their home attractional. I have elaborated on the major themes below.

#### **Word of God and Prayer as Central to All Activities**

A theme that evolved when I looked at the methods used by missional families is the place that they gave to God's word and prayer. All the methods that the missional families adopted had the Word of God and prayer as the foundations for all its activities.

All the families emphasized the need for both personal quiet time and family worship.

Though many of them have inculcated family prayer from their home of origin, most of them have changed the pattern their parents followed. Except one couple, all have made it as interactive as possible so that family worship does not go on as a ritual. Many of them have been creative by using contemporary songs, reciting memory verses, using picture Bibles, and children friendly devotions to inculcate interest in family worship for kids. One couple (5. BP) said, “We don’t follow a set pattern, because we can’t do that with our children. We sometimes play games and have continuous serial kind of Bible stories and build suspense for children and so they wait for the next day.” One of the fathers (6. ON), who is keen to help his son understand God’s word, said, “I and my son read the same passage for quiet time, and then I prepare some questions based on the passage, and I would discuss with him on the passage during our morning walk.” I heard many similar stories that showed the place of Gods word in missional family.

Most of them meet at least once a day for family worship while some meet both mornings and evenings. Most of the families spent an average of 30 to 45 minutes as a family and around fifteen to thirty minutes for personal worship.

Prayer also is an integral part of family worship. The families bring their personal needs along with the needs of others to the family altar. Every child is oriented to prayer from childhood. One father (4. SD) said, “I go to all the three beds of my kids and pray for them individually before they go to bed.” In a few families, couples spent time together in prayer other than their personal prayer and family prayer. One wife (6. ON) said, “I have never slept without praying together with my husband, however late he comes back home from work.” Another couple (3. SR) said, “Everyday we spend at least

20 minutes kneeling down and praying before we go to bed.” Since the families engage regularly with people in their pain, sufferings, and in their needs, many of these requests surface in family prayer. During Ramadan season, a young family (4. SD) with children started praying those forty days for the Muslim world. Hence, in some homes, I realized that even the children are engaged in praying for world mission. A father shared that his seven year old son regularly prays for his friends to come to know Jesus. Intercession includes their relatives, friends, and others in need. It includes praying for people’s salvation. As mentioned in the section on motivation of missional families, a wife said that she prayed continuously for two years for all her relatives and all extended families by name to come to know the Lord. She said, “After ten years I’m seeing how all the family members whom I had secretly prayed for have now come to know the Lord.” All the missional couples have used prayer as a tool to connect with their neighbors. A few couples shared incidents of Gods healing when they went out and prayed for others. One of the interviewees (7. SB) who visited a sick child in her apartment shared the following story:

I requested my Brahmin neighbor if I could lay my hands and pray for the child. She allowed me to pray and I left after praying. After 3-4 hours of praying the child’s mother came running to my home to inform me that the child is well after I prayed.

One of them shared an incident of healing where the healed person became a believer in Christ along with his family. One couple (4. SD) also shared how when they started praying, God brought people with needs to their doorsteps. Missional families are also engaged in teaching God’s word to others. Most of the families conduct weekly Bible study program either for the youth or for teens or for couples and families. They use various tools such as Homebuilders, life builders, Navigators, purpose driven life, etc.



One of the internal benefits of nurturing others is the nurturing of the family members. Nurturing and growth in faith of their own kids happen because of these activities happening at home. Besides organized Bible studies, all of them are engaged in personal mentoring and discipleship of many people. Usually one on one mentoring happens on the weekends, and some of them because of their special needs meet personally. In addition to personal meetings with people, other methods used regularly to encourage some of their contacts include personal short message service (SMS) and telephone calls. Some Bible studies also have memorizing of Scripture as part of their weekly assignment. Some of the couples take a great deal of effort to disciple others by spending their time and spend time to equip themselves. One of them said, “I fast and pray before I take the study,” and many of them shared that they refer to commentaries and other Internet tools to understand some of the theological issues. One of them said, “I feel ill-equipped, and so I have to do so much of reading and preparing for the Bible studies. Since my wife is better in this area, she does the study too.” So both men and women are equally engaged in teaching in most families. Therefore, missional families see prayer and Gods word as the hub for all their activities.

### **Family Oneness and Communication**

All the participants unequivocally talked about their openness to one another when explaining the loving relationship between family members. As per the second criteria discussed in the literature review for a missional family, missional families are “loving families” This theme highlighted the reason behind them being a “loving family.” One couple (5. BP) said, “We had told each other at the early stage of our marriage that

we don't have any special powers to find out what is going on each other's mind, it's better to express it openly."

Openness, transparency, encouraging one another, appreciating each other, and discussing issues openly are some of the phrases and words that kept repeating in many interviews. In many of my interviews, I as a participant observer, observed the way many of the couples appreciated one another without any pretense. They were joyful in complementing each other, which proved to me their openness and transparency. They have the freedom to express their likes, dislikes, their wants and needs. They had the freedom to criticize one another in a healthy manner. "My wife is my best critic," said the scientist (3. SR) husband about his wife. Their openness also extends toward their children. Many participant couples who are parents shared how their children have also been open with them. They are able to share their pains, sorrows, and mistakes with openness to their parents. One person said, "For them [children] there is no fear of being misunderstood." Openness between the couple also has helped them to handle conflicts well. A wife mentioned her story as to how she feared sex after her marriage and was nervous in communicating this fear to her husband. Her husband patiently dealt with her fears, and one night she sat and spoke to her husband about all her fears. She said, "That night was a healing point for me." From that night on, they decided to speak everything openly. She said, "Communication has been a big thing, we share everything so openly." Open communication between the couple helped to resolve the issue that could have become a point of conflict between them. Spending time with family also has played a great part in family unity. To have quality time with children, some women have consciously chosen to stay home, giving up their career plans to be more available for

their children. Two women have taken part-time jobs to spend quality time with children as their husbands have jobs that are more demanding. Therefore, families make a conscious effort to spend time with each other. A senior couple, whose children are married, shared how they had a dedicated family night every week to spend quality time with their children.

Their openness to one another also comes from their attitude to learn from each other, their children, from mistakes, and from God's word. Such attitude of learning has played a part in enhancing family oneness. One husband (7. SB) referred to his wife as his mentor and feels greatly encouraged by her. Another wife shared how her husband is her "spiritual mentor." One couple (5. BP) mentioned that they regularly asked each other evaluatory questions such as "Is there anything that you do not like about the way I handled the situation?" which helped them change their ways. All of them shared their openness to learn from their children. "We are not threatened to say sorry to our children." Another said, "We have apologized many times to our kids." The openness of the couples was also because of their openness in hearing God's voice. One person said, "Nowadays when I feel sometimes differently from my husband, instead of pushing my opinion, I talk less and allow God's Spirit to work." Therefore, the finding shows a missional family is a loving family because they are willing to listen and learn from one another and God.

Their openness has helped the couples face crises together. All the couples shared at least one tough situation that they have faced together. Childlessness, miscarriage, cancer, financial constraints, and job loss were some of the crises the couples faced. However, these situations have only drawn them closer rather than caused them to drift

apart. They have supported and stood with each other in tough times. One of the interviewees, when sharing about tough moments added, “Even during those tough times, we had very good physical intimacy.” This response was a spontaneous answer, which was indicative of their oneness in mind, spirit, and body even in the tough situations of their lives. Strong boundaries preserve their openness to one another. The family members of these missional families knew their boundaries and limits. “These boundaries are laid based on the standards of God’s word,” said one couple. One couple shared how they laid boundaries without threatening or frightening their children, which helped kids to come back when they had crossed it. Since they were open to one another, all the families have fun in their home. Some mentioned that their children love coming back home, as it is a place of fun and joy. “We allow our children to tease us, and in turn we also tease them and have so much fun” was the remark of one couple about their family relationship. “We don’t just speak spiritual things, we share jokes and riddles and pull each other’s leg,” said a senior couple. Laughter and fun were common to all families. Openness and communication between each other is a method that missional families adopted to be a loving family and an attractional family. Thus, the missional families tried to reach others in the strength of their relationship.

### **Use of Opportunities to Connect with Others**

The third theme that was common as a method used by all families is the way the families connected to others outside their home. One of the common ways the missional families connect and incarnate into people’s life is by making intentional visits, using festivals and occasions, being involved in common interest, experiencing crisis, and meeting through children. The families make intentional visits to their extended families,

irrespective of neighborhood, religion, caste, or economic conditions. A couple said, “When we were in Whitefield we used to go door to door to invite people to our home for Easter breakfast.” Another couple (7. SB) said, “By inviting people for parties such as birthday party, welcome party, we make it a point to go to their houses whom we do not know, and it has helped us to know many people.” They also said that they go and visit them during their festivals. This way they also get to know their neighborhood and also use visits as an occasion to connect with them. Hence, the families usually look for any reason to invite people home, using occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries, or festivals such as Christmas or Easter. Missional families had realized that they cannot just connect during occasions, but one needs to be in constant touch to build relationship. Hence, the families also connect with their neighborhood by initiating common programs, picnics, or screening a movie, etc. Being friendly, saying hello with a smile, enjoying a good relationship with people in office and neighborhood, learning to mix well with others, and caring for people were some of the methods adopted by these families to build good rapport with others. Missional families are also involved in the common welfare of the residents in their area. One of them said, “My neighbors see me as a spokesman whenever they want to present any concerns of their street or colony to government officials.” Another family said, “They wanted to make me the president of the apartments association.”, missional families wait to use any opportunity to get connected, which truly makes them an incarnational family.

Another method used by the participant families to connect with others is to keep themselves available to people during their crisis. They do reach out in crisis with any “intention to convert” as one of the participant mentioned, “but it’s a gift of God that

helps us to be with people in need.” Families shared how they were available to people in various crises, which included material, spiritual, emotional or physical. These include not only neighbors and friends but also one’s own extended families and relatives. Many of their own family members call them for counseling help. Two families mentioned how they received calls in the midnight, and they sometimes leave their own children in the homes and rush to solve family crises. The scientist husband said, “For any emergencies they [youngsters] first come to our home for prayer.”

Another natural method to connect was through children. They play a major role in making the connections easier. Families who have little children shared many stories as to how they connect to parents through their children. One wife who works part time (5. BP) said, “Our kids call all of their friends just like a picnic, they come home to watch some movies and we show them children related DVDs like Veggie Tales, etc.” The children share their experiences with their parents and eventually lead to connection between the parents. Parents also allow their children to visit other neighborhood families; even have sleepovers with their friends leading to connections with their families. Two of the participant wives said, “We go with our kids to play areas.” The women bring their children, and they get to share many of their personal issues and problems, which serve to connect with other families. Thus, missional families who connect to others in need use every opportunity.

### **Willingness to Sacrifice for Others’ Needs**

Neighbors, youngsters, migrant youth, and young families are the ones who frequent these missional homes. The theme that evolved in relation to the families’ involvement in the lives of so many people is their willingness to sacrifice for the needs

of others. One of the participants (4. SD) said that she would not mind staying up the whole night talking to someone in need, which shows her heart to sacrifice her time and energy for others. Some of those who are engaged in dealing with couples and families shared they use the weekends or nights to speak to these families, as that is the only time they get in their schedule. Most of them have sacrificed their weekends as they have some youngsters stay overnight wanting counseling from them. One couple shared that “sometimes our kids have to sleep in the couch and our bedrooms also get occupied,” but no families expressed regrets for being accommodating, instead they expressed joy and fun. One young family (7. SB) said, “We are willing to give all we have for him,” and another (2.UE) said, “We are not money minded and so we don’t have any great plans.” One of the dentists (2. UE) shared their method of reaching out to others. She shares Christ with her patients, especially when she is working on her patient seated in the dentist chair. She then introduces her receptive patients to her husband who does the follow-up as he worked in the same hospital in the administrative department. Since he was struggling to balance his profession and the follow-up ministry, they together decided that one of them would give up their career plans, and the husband decided to serve God full-time. They decided to manage with one income for the sake of ministry. Most of the couples economically fall in the category of the Indian middle class. As I observed, most of their homes were small or medium (two to three bedrooms), but I realized that they were willing to share their limited space to make Christ known to others, which shows their willingness to sacrifice. Therefore, missional families are willing to sacrifice for others rather than looking at their own comfort.

## Witnessing by Life and Word

The missional families that I interviewed knew that they could attract others to Christ, only if their life their own lives bore testimony to their words and hence, witnessing by life and word evolved as one of the major themes. When I was asked a couple about their Christian witness, the husband said, “Only transformed life will attract.” In the office, all these families have made their identity clear as Christians. Some of them in their workplaces are the only Christians, and they have taken stands against the tide when they faced challenges to their conviction. The scientist couple said, “It’s easy to deal with people below you, but when your boss asks you to take the *Prasad* [ a Hindi word for food offered to idols] and when you deny, it can even affect your appraisal.” They said, “Nowadays, they know our stand, and they do not offer to us.” A participant husband who is a computer sales engineer shared similar story when their office had a special *pooja* [Hindu worship] to idols in their office. He refused to attend the meeting, but graciously explained his stand to his colleagues. Some of them even read their Bibles during their free time or during breaks, which people have observed. During these trying times they stand firm in what they believe against the tide. A professor in a college (8. SB) shared how she received a framed picture of Jesus as her farewell gift from her colleagues and students, which shows others perception of her. The same teacher mentioned that her students know she is more approachable than others are, and has had many students visit her home even after she left the college. I heard many stories by these families about how their lives and witness have been a connecting point for them to reach their colleagues, neighbors, and friends. However, all of them are prepared to share their faith at any given time. One husband said, “I was asked to speak in a funeral



meeting of a Hindu neighbor to whom I had shared the gospel. His family insisted that I speak at least few words.” He explained how he shared the Word amidst a Hindu crowd. Another family narrated similar incident. Many of them shared the gospel either in their office or with any of their acquaintance. One wife said, “I am not ashamed of sharing the gospel any time to anyone.” Such preparedness to share their faith with anyone is a common characteristic of missional families. Some of these families have also equipped themselves to present their faith by reading and listening to apologetic materials such as that of Ravi Zacharias. Therefore, witnessing for Christ happens by both words and life.

### **Hospitality and Generosity Practiced**

A significant theme that I observed from the data, and as a participant observant, is the aspect of hospitality and generosity practiced in these homes. In many of these homes, women play a major role in the hospitality of the families. Hospitality always accompanies when someone visits the family. One home has Bible study in the morning for teenagers every Wednesday. The wife of the home said, “I prepare breakfast every Wednesday morning for all the boys as they have to go to college from my place.” This home is a one-income pastor’s family, which truly shows their generosity. Around ten of them gather for the meeting. One wife (2. UE) who had medical student’s prayer every week in her home mentioned, “I used to make thirty burgers every week for the Bible study.” Recollecting those days she said, “When we look back, we are surprised that we could do this with such small incomes then.” One family, which especially attracts many migrants from another state (as this couple also belongs to the same state), said, “Sometimes the students do everything at home and often they share all their issues with my wife in the kitchen. They help her in the kitchen and also get her advice.” These

young people feel it is a home away from home. Women in many homes play a major role to make their home a place of warmth and love. Many husbands in the interview expressed their thankfulness to God for their wives who are able to show such hospitality. Hospitality is also being friendly, loving, and making others feel the warmth in one's home. "Many young people come home because they know they won't be judged and condemned," said a participant couple who have conducted a special Bible study for addicts in their home. I had felt the hospitality myself when I walked as a stranger into some homes to do the interview. In three homes, they even insisted that I have dinner with them, which I gladly obliged. Apparently, their generosity and hospitality is a method that was common to all.

### **Summary of Research Question #2 Analysis**

The intent of research question 2 was to explore the various methods used by missional families in reaching other people. They all understood the importance of reaching their own before they reached out to others. They all emphasize Scripture and prayer as the hub for all their activities. The major methods adopted by the missional families covered all the five criteria of worshipping, loving, incarnational, attractional, and nurturing. Every family had their area of strength and weakness, and not all could cover adequately all five areas of missional criteria as much as they desired. However, the methods discussed are not limited to what they did, but reflected who they are, too. Thus, the methods commonly found in all the families were not only external methods to reach others, but also reflected the characteristics of a missional family. The Word of God and prayer were the foundation of all their activities, and their family oneness and communication played a significant role to face many challenges. Use of every

opportunity to connect with others was strategic, but their willingness to sacrifice for others need that made them more attractive. They witnessed both by life and word and their homes were open for anyone in crisis. Hospitality and generosity spontaneously flowed in their home, which brought many people to their doors. All of them were also engaged in discipling others. Hence, methods not only showed their passion for others but also showed their character.

### **Research Question #3 Analysis**

This purpose of the third research question was to understand some of the challenges or fears the families face in being a missional family. Because I visited all their homes personally for the interview, I could witness and visualize their situation in a clear way. My own personal observation has also helped me in analyzing some of their challenges in accomplishing their task as missional family. Though some of the challenges are unique to a certain family, which is based on their own professional and personal background, I found certain common challenges like work culture and time, which are common urban issues. From all the challenges expressed, I have picked up common themes that affect families in a deeper way. The themes highlighted are intrusions and loss of privacy, work-life balance affecting members of the family, the challenge to connect with people of other faith for full timers and indoctrination of fundamentalists. I have discussed below the various challenges pertaining to the families' call to be missional families.

#### **Intrusions and Loss of Privacy**

A common theme implicit in the interview was their loss of privacy at times. Though many of them did not want to elaborate on their loss of privacy as a big challenge because of their love for people and ministry, it did spill out in various forms when I

enquired about their challenges. A senior couple shared how their own relationship came under attack because of intruders who took advantage of their benevolence and caused confusion in their relationship. However, since the couple was rooted in love and could deal with issues openly, it did not affect their relationship much. Another family shared how at times people do not give them a break. The couple said, “We know when we come back these boys will be at home. So we go straight from our office to do our shopping, visiting people, and then we come back home.” Some people have not been sensitive to the families’ needs and have invaded their private time. Nevertheless, many of them truly do not have any private time, especially the ones who have been working with students. One couple shared that to spare their own privacy they even at times have to tell the students to leave for the day. The wife said with lots of laughter, “I sometimes show my frustration on him” (referring to her husband). In homes where both husband and wife are working outside their home, students’ hanging in late at night at times becomes tough for the family to handle. However, interestingly each family has also found a way to handle these intruders.

### **Less Opportunity for Full-Time Ministers**

Another theme that I observed as challenges for participant families in full-time ministry is their limitation to the outside world. Most of the non-Christian friends the missional families under study have are their colleagues in the office to whom they can witness or their neighbors. A pastor’s wife shared with regret, “When we lived in Pune, we had lots of non-Christians around. Having them over for Christmas, having meals was so good, but now I got confined to a mission compound now. I really wish I get back my old days.” Full-time ministers get to interact with people of other faiths only through their

neighborhood or through any organized ministry of their church. One of the participants stayed in a place similar to a mission compound that made it even difficult to connect to neighbors. A person who was leading home churches shared how they went from house to house to invite their neighbors to their home for Christmas and Easter. Apparently, full-time ministers need to make an extra effort, as they do not have natural acquaintance. However, a pastor shared how he had many visitors for prayers from non-Christian faiths to his home when he was staying in a church compound. A person who moved out of his secular job to serve as a pastor of a home church mentioned that he consciously made friends by smiling and saying hello to his neighbors. He said, “People in their colony come to us for any spiritual needs even from other faith.” Hence, the opportunities become limited for people who work in the context of a church, and the ones who work in secular offices are able to reach many.

### **Work-Life Balance**

Balancing family and work is another theme that evolved as a challenge to especially families where both partners are working. Though many have strong desires to impact more people, which I came to know through a direct question I asked them with regard to their satisfaction level in reaching out to others, many are unable to find enough time. Many of them acknowledged they were dissatisfied. Their greatest challenge is the limitation of time. The theme that stood out as a challenge was mainly their struggle to balance family and work. People who work in private sector companies face this problem more than those in public sectors. A couple who works in a federal government job is back home at 5 p.m. The two IT professionals sometimes reach home by midnight and sometime even later, so children hardly get to see their dads. Therefore, some of them set

apart time for family in order to balance their family and work. One of them mentioned that he has made clear to his superiors that he would want to reach home early from his office. He also mentioned, “I would complete all my phone calls in the office or on my way home, so I need not sit with my phone but instead I can spend time with my kids.” The involvement of missional families in the lives of others also affects their time with their own children. One of the couples shared with much pain and regret that “we did not realize we were ignoring our son, till we were called by the school counselor.” The husband said, “We went overboard on ministry,” and they were ignorant of neglecting their child. This incident served as a wake-up call to the couple and helped them to bring back family priority. A couple who accommodated a drug addict at home said, “I feel I neglected my kids because I was so concerned about the addict child and did not give the privileged place I should have given my kids. They may not feel that, but I feel that.” The good aspect in spite of the challenges is to know that families have understood their issues and have been trying to work out in various ways to balance family, ministry, and work.

### **Indoctrination by Hindu Groups against Christians**

A common theme the families expressed as a challenge was the calculated attempt by Hindu fundamentalists and media to propagate against Christians. “When we call for Christmas programs in our office, our colleagues sometimes will comment, ‘conversion program has started,’” said a couple who feel constant indoctrination by the media and other Hindu revivalist have caused people to be overcautious of any Christian programs. All the families under study shared this view. During attacks against Christians one of the wives (2. UE) said, “Yes, we were prepared for anything.” People tend to call any

Christian activity a “conversion,” and it makes the task of sharing Christ more difficult.

In spite of these hindrances, the missional families are marching on and are willing to risk their lives for the gospel.

### **Summary of Major Findings**

The findings of the major motivation of missional families helped me to understand their influences, beliefs, incidents, and aspirations. The six themes that evolved helped me to see their true intentions in being missional. The finding with regard to their motivations were

- The influence of their home of origin, spouse, and other model families,
- Their sense of God’s call and burden for people to know Christ,
- Their understanding of God and their experience,
- Their understanding of home as a sacred place for ministry,
- Their desire to leave a godly legacy to their children, and
- Their desire to be a blessing for others, which allows them to keep themselves

available.

With regard to methods the six methods common to all the missional families are

- Use of the Word of God and prayer as the hub of all activities,
- Family oneness and communication,
- Use of every opportunity to connect with others,
- Willingness to sacrifice for others’ needs,
- Hospitality and generosity, and
- Witness by life and word.

All the methods used by missional families are anchored in Scripture and prayer. Worship and prayer is the common point of all the activities both inside and outside of their home. Their methods first focused on strengthening each other's relationship before they went out for others. Every family had unique methods based on their strengths, their time factors, and their demographics. Their methods also reflected their beliefs and their attitude toward others. Missional homes used every opportunity to connect to others, they were available in crisis, they were willing to sacrifice for others, they practiced generosity and hospitality, they were all engaged in discipleship, and, above all, they witnessed both by their own life and word.

Though these missional families face many challenges, they look beyond the challenges and move ahead to pursue their passion for the Lord and his work. The findings with regard to their major challenges are

- Intrusions and loss of privacy,
- Full-time ministers having difficulty to connecting to people of other faiths,
- Work-life balance affecting members of the family, and
- Indoctrination of Hindu fundamentalists against Christians.

Chapter 5 details conclusions and implications for the findings of the study. These discussions include interpretation of the data, practical applications to use in families for mission and its limitations.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

The purpose of the study on missional families was to explore and understand the motivation of the missional families, and to understand the various methods they used to achieve their goals and their challenges. The study helped me to see the opportunities that missional families have, their lifestyle, their methods, their vision and mission, their attitude toward God, themselves, and others, their beliefs and their experiences, their passion to reach others, and their relationships within the family. The study looked at all five criteria in the definition of missional families, and I found that some families were stronger in a few criteria but were weaker in the others. However, what I found exciting about this research was to see the missional families in the Word of God that I have discussed in literature review of Chapter 2 blending with the missional families under study. Though age, time, and context have brought various changes and challenges for the missional families of today, I see many common characteristics, which remain untouched over time. I have elaborated and discussed in the following sections all the major findings of the three research questions and the additional findings.

#### **Major Findings and Further Analysis**

Chapter 4 detailed the findings of the study. The findings of this research with regard to the motivation of the couples to be missional are (1) the influence of their home of origin, spouse, and other model families; (2) their sense of God's call and burden for people to know Christ; (3) their understanding of God and their experience; (4) their understanding of home as a sacred place for ministry; (5) their desire to leave a godly

legacy to their children; and, (6) their desire to be a blessing for others, which allows them to keep themselves available.

The methods that the missional families had chosen reflect who they are, more than just what they do. The common themes that emerged as prominent methods used by missional families are (1) use of the Word of God and prayer as the hub of all activities, (2) family oneness and communication, (3) use of every opportunity to connect with others, (4) willingness to sacrifice for other's needs, (5) hospitality and generosity, and (6) their witness by life and word.

Finally, the challenges that the missional families face were not limited to some of their hardships, but the challenges reveals how they even affect their call to be missional families. The challenges are (1) intrusions and loss of privacy, (2) work-life balance affecting members of the family, (3) difficulty connecting with people of other faiths for those in full-time ministry, and (4) indoctrination of Hindu fundamentalist on the society. Other surprise findings were also there though some were disappointing. After the discussions about the three research questions, I have discussed the additional research findings as a separate section.

### **Research Question 1**

The purpose of research question 1 was to know what made these families missional. An exploration into motivations of missional families gave me great insight into the causative factors that made a family missional, and it helped me to correlate it with the methods they have adopted in fulfilling their missional purpose. As I mentioned in Chapter 4, I see four major factors that played a role in making them missional. They

are influences, faith and beliefs, incidents, and aspirations. Their influence ranges from their own home, their colleagues, model families, and Christian organizations.

**Influence of home of origin, spouse, and other families.** The influence of the home of origin in making the family missional is an interesting phenomenon as I find support for this view from the Scripture. In the literature review about Cornelius's family as a model missional family, the Bible records in Acts 10:2, Cornelius's faith was not just an individual experience; rather, it was contagious to his entire household. "He and all his family were devout and God-fearing." The phrase "He and all his family" qualifies the entire household, including not just the immediate family but also servants, slaves, freedmen, laborers, and sometime even business associates and tenants. The finding of this research shows how spouses have influenced their mates in becoming missional. I see the same in Cornelius's family, and therefore the influence of one's mate has its roots in scripture. In 1 Peter 3:1-2, Peter expounds as to how even unbelieving husbands can be influenced by their wives not even by using words but by the behavior of their wives. Similarly, I see in Scripture when one of the partners receives God's call to go as a missionary to fulfill God's mission, the other partner also yielded to the call of God. The biblical example is the case of Abraham and Sarah. If Sarah did not yield to God's call to leave her country along with Abraham, a missional family in Abraham would be less probable.

The godly influence of parents trickling down to their children finds its model in the family of Cornelius as recorded in Acts 10. As mentioned in the literature review about the importance of the household codes in the Old Testament, the mandate for every Israelite parent was to teach and talk scripture to their children, in order to pass on a

godly legacy (Deut. 6:6-9). Most of the missional families mentioned that their parents were their primary influence especially in the area of becoming a worshipping family, though many did not appreciate the discipline of family worship when they were children. As mentioned in my findings in Chapter 4, family worship has now become the hub of all their activities. The seeds sown by parents had such deep influence even when some parents had forcibly engaged them in family worship. Similarly, the influence of other Christian families and even their own spouse show how godly influence can have deep impact on people beyond one's own immediate family, though at times one may not be conscious of the such impact. Again, from the life of Cornelius, one can realize his influence spread not just to his immediate family. He had influenced even his colleagues, friends, and relatives. In the same way, the model families who influenced the participant families probably would not even realize their impact in these missional homes. Thus, the findings on the motivation of the missional families' points that ones home is the primary influence for impacting a person to be missional more than any other institution (which includes even the church).

**Their sense of God's call and burden for families to know Christ.** Every missional family senses a call from God and feels burdened about other families who do not know Christ. They are sensitive to the promptings of the Spirit of God. As noted in the literature review, God chose the missional families in Old Testament such as Noah, Abraham, and David. They knew God's mission for their life, and they pursued God's purpose. In Acts 13:36 the Scripture says, "For when David had *served God's purpose* [emphasis mine] in his own generation, he fell asleep." David served the purpose of God in his generation and the same goes with Abraham, Noah, and other missional families in

the Scripture. They knew God's call in their life, and they were sensitive to accomplish his purpose in their life. In the New Testament, a number of families like that of Aquila and Priscilla were willing to risk their lives because they sensed a call from God and they felt a burden about people who did not know Christ. Again from the life of Cornelius, who is my model missional family referred in the literature review, his invitation to his close friends and relatives during the visit of Peter to his home in Acts 10 shows his burden for people to know Christ. The findings reveal that the Holy Spirit also motivated the missional families who led them to various people, which is consistent with the leading and promptings of the Holy Spirit experienced by many in the New Testament. The leading of Philip to share with the eunuch, and the leading of Paul in his missionary journey to go and not to go to some places shows the pattern of the Holy Spirit leading people to accomplish his purpose.

**Their understanding of God and their experience.** The missional families understanding of God and their personal experience of God in their lives motivated them to be missional families. Peter's turning point in the home of Cornelius motivated him in his shift from a purely Jewish mission to pursue also a gentile mission. The mission and pursuit of Peter changed after he experienced God working mightily among the gentiles. His personal experience of God changed the direction of Peter's ministry. In addition, just like Peter, missional families were missional because of their personal encounter and relationship with God, which in itself is motivating.

Besides their relationship with God, their passion to make him known comes from their gratitude to God in saving them from sin. As I mentioned in Chapter 4, some of them had incidents that enabled them to see the purpose of life through the lens of

eternity. Paul's own passion to make Christ known comes from his conversion experience. Paul seems to draw strength from explaining his own experience of conversion repeatedly. Similarly, I see that missional families' experience with Christ gives them a sense of purpose and call, and they want others to have a similar experience, which they had with Christ Jesus. Therefore, I strongly believe missional families can become missional only when they begin to view their life through the lens of eternity.

**Understanding of home as a sacred place for ministry.** The missional families are motivated to use their home because they see their home as a sacred place. Many of their activities in reaching, teaching, nurturing, counseling, and praying for others all happens in these missional homes as they see their home as a mission base. This view of seeing their home as a missional base is exactly how the participants in the early church saw their homes. As I have discussed in my literature review, the home became the sacred place of fellowshiping and meeting in the early Church. Understanding that ministry starts inside one's home helps in keeping their home in orderly fashion. The household codes discussed in the Pauline letters discussed in Chapter 2 confirm how God expects orderliness within one's home, and that is what needs to translate outside. I do not think a missional family can be dichotomous in their attitude and concern between what happens outside and inside their home. Therefore, to understand one's home as a place of ministry is scriptural and is a good motivation for missional families. It also keeps every action within the four walls in good accountability to God, which includes the way one relates to his or her spouse and children.

**Their desire to leave a godly legacy to their children.** The need to be an influence in one's own home before one goes outside has been repeated throughout the

literature review and is a vital motivation for missional families. As mentioned in the findings in Chapter 4, missional parents want to be a role model to their own children. They feel accountable to God for the way they bring up their children. In Chapter 2 of the literature review, the household code in the Old Testament specifically mentions the need for the parents to teach the commandments of God to their children. These godly virtues need to be first practiced at home for children to see them. This form of modeling is not to be taken lightly as it reflects God's expectation of conduct in a godly home. The Israelite families had a missional mandate to fulfill, which the new and redeemed Israel of God today needs to continue. Thus, the motivation of families to leave a godly legacy to their own children is a motivation in the right direction, and it is a scriptural expectation.

**Desire to be a blessing and be available to others.** Their deep longing to be a blessing comes from their understanding of their own goal and purpose in Christ. The family of Cornelius kept themselves available to the needs of others, which included the poor. His gifts to the poor and his prayers went to God as a memorial offering (Acts 10:4). The sociohistorical research of the early churches confirms the early church families' desire to be available for others (Gehring 293). Being available was not a forced virtue, but I found this desire as a natural phenomenon of every Christian family interviewed. They all loved people and they want to use their homes for God's glory. As recipients of God's blessing, missional families want to share their blessings with every human being irrespective of color, caste, or creed, which I think is the work of God in each of their lives. Indeed their motivation also shows their perspective of one's identity

in Christ. As Paul says in Colossians 3:11, “There is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.”

The motivation also gives me insight into their perspectives, their beliefs, their experience and their passion for people, which well correlates with the motivation that drove the missional families in the Word for his mission. This correlation of today’s missional families and the missional families of biblical times also helps me to understand that the motivation of any person who has a Christ experience need not differ by time and culture, but it remains the same for centuries. What probably could change is the method, which I discuss in the following section.

## **Research Question 2**

The purpose of research question 2 was to explore the methods that missional families in the city of Bangalore adopted to reach their missional goal and purpose. I found six major themes as major methods used by missional families: (1) use of the Word of God and prayer as the hub of all activities, (2) family oneness and communication, (3) use of every opportunity to connect with others, (4) willingness to sacrifice for others need, (5) hospitality and generosity, and, (6) their witness by life and word. Their method does not reveal what they did, but who they are. As noted in the literature review, missional families, just like missional churches, are asking the question, “What has God called us to be and do in our current cultural context?” (Frost and Hirsch 7). These themes have much similarity with the missional families in the Word of God, which I have elaborated and discussed.

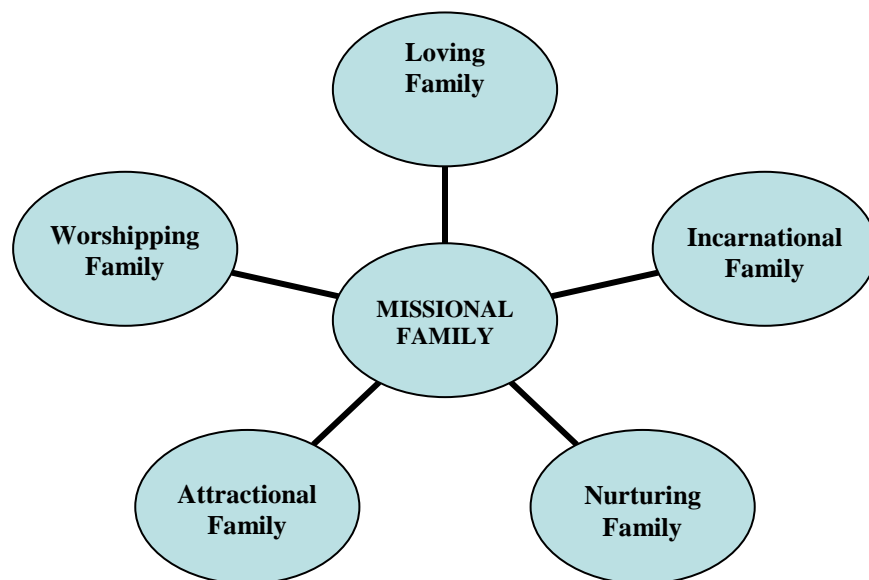
**Use of the Word of God and prayer as the hub of all activities.** When I started my research, I saw the place of worship in a missional home as one of the activities of a



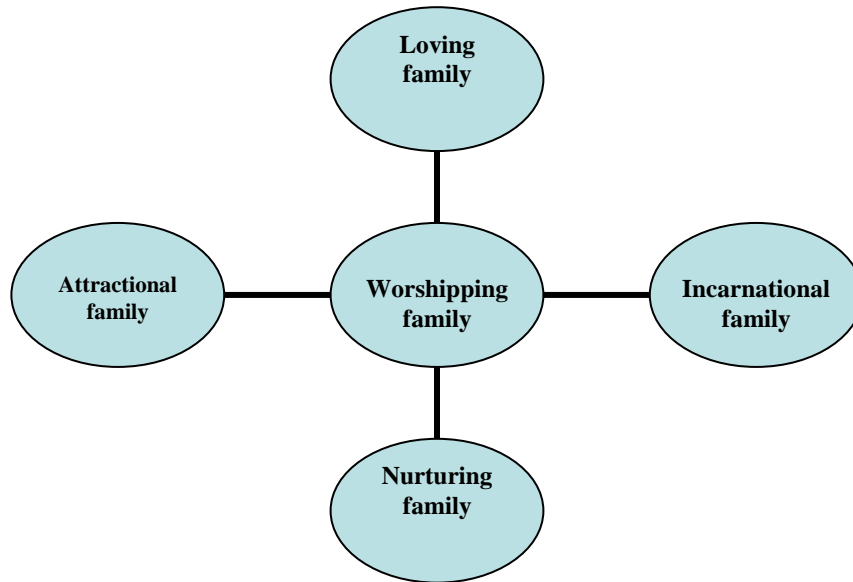
missional home (represented in Figure 5.1). However, as I analyzed the data, I saw worship as the center of all the activity of a missional family as represented in Figure 5.2. All the missional families I discussed in the literature review had worship as their key. Starting from the missional family of the Godhead to the missional families found in the New Testament all of them had prioritized worship. When Jesus was agonizing in the garden of Gethsemane in prayer, God the father strengthened him. The family of the Godhead could enjoy intimate communion even during crises through prayer. Similarly, the missional families I interviewed used prayer as a tool to resolve their conflicts. The Word of God is the guide for families in every area of their life. Since all of them have strong family time and individual time with God, it affected their relationships, it affected their conviction and belief to be a witness among their colleagues or their own friends, and it influenced their own lives. Their beliefs and principles became their guide to having a loving relationship. Their method to incarnate or be attractional was rooted in their knowledge of Scripture and in their relationship with God. Prayer is a wonderful tool to reach others in India. As recorded in the findings, when the missional families prayed for others, they were happy. Healing and deliverance gave easy access into homes of people of other faiths. Their knowledge of the Scripture empowered them to share the Word at an opportune time like the one during the funeral of a Hindu family. The families' involvement in teaching the Scripture through various Bible studies to nurture others also increased their knowledge of the Scripture, which I feel kept them ready to share their faith in all seasons.

I had specially highlighted Aquila and Priscilla in Chapter 2, whom Paul remembers with such profoundness in many of his letters. The couple's unshakable faith

and devotion to Christ, and their ability to discern and teach correctly the Word of God even to people like Apollos (Acts 18:26) are some of their outstanding characteristics. Missional families do not see their relationship and time with God as yet another activity ( see Figure 5.1), but it as the fulcrum of all the engagements of a missional family ( see Figure 5.2). Hence, by my findings I feel a family can be missional only if they have strong roots in God's word and have a culture of prayer in all their engagements.



**Figure 5.1. My original diagram of a missional family.**



**Figure 5.2. My final diagram of a missional family.**

**Family oneness and communication.** The methods of missional families were not limited to what they did, but whom they were also mattered. The key aspect of being missional is not about doing mission, but it is about being what God wants as a family. Their mission started at home, they considered ministering to one's own family also as important, and their witness was strong within their own home before it went outside. All the family had strong communication within the family, and they stood united in crisis. This oneness and communication within the family reflects so much the characteristics of the loving relationship that exists within the family of the Godhead as discussed in the literature review. The four characteristics that show a deep loving relationship within the family of Godhead are full equality, glad submission, mutual deference, and joyful intimacy (Seamands 48). Their mission to create, their mission to restore and to redeem had its roots in the strength and oneness that exists among the Trinitarian Godhead.

However, today unfortunately a great divide exists between the ministry done within one's home and the ministry that one does outside the home. The divide between the sacred and secular, private and public, has also crept into Christendom. The understanding of what happens within the home as private and the one outside as public has created a divide between one's attitude within one's home and outside. In the city of Bangalore, the wife of a pastor of a megachurch has complained and has walked away from her husband citing reasons of abuse and suspicion. During the crisis within his home, the leaders elected him as the head of his denominational church in spite of his own house not being in order. Having a loving relationship with one's spouse serves as a basic qualification to be a leader of a church as described by Paul to Timothy ( 1 Tim. 3:5), but it is conveniently ignored because of this divide between private and public, sacred and secular. What the leader does on a Sunday morning is sacred, and what happens at home is a secret. As referred in the literature review, Dunn shares a useful insight as to how becoming a member of the new family of Jesus added responsibility to have a well-ordered home than its neglect:

To become a member of the new family of Jesus did not justify neglect of household and it served a minimum of at least two purposes. Firstly, since all the earlier churches were "house-churches", the model of a well-ordered household also served as a model of a well-ordered congregation. (56)

The method adopted by these missional families is the way to go forward as they have not limited their methods to doing mission but they are also being the reflection of God to the world. The call to be his witness in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth truly shows that mission starts in the way one orders his own home first before he reaches to others.

**Use of every opportunity to connect with others.** Some of the common ways the missional families connect and incarnate into people's lives are by making intentional visits, using of festivals and occasions, being involved in common interests, helping during crises, and meeting through children. This method requires one to move out of one's comfort zone and go out to the streets to make friends with neighbors and others. As the missional family of Godhead described in Chapter 2 left the comfort of heaven and incarnated as man, these missional families were willing to initiate and use opportunities to connect with their neighbors. The use of festivals is indeed a great strategy in India as India is a land of religious festivals. People are excited to be part of any religious festival. One of the participant couples shared how their Hindu neighbor comes to their home to make cookies for Christmas every year. The missional families not only invite their neighbors to their home, but some go over to attend their festival. This act is a bold step that missional families take in order to connect with their neighborhoods. Because Hinduism is an individualistic religion, individuals go to the temple to worship their god in their own time and convenience. Because they do not have the concept of fellowship and communion, any meeting that helps them to get together and have some fellowship is exciting to them. A participant couple who often uses their home to do various programs to gather their neighbors also shared this view. As I have shared in my introduction and in the literature review, people receive the gospel well when done in the context of a close relationship, and usually conversion does not take place based on a philosophical understanding of God. Rather, it often happens through an experience of God through one's neighbor or friend. To establish relationships as families rather than just as individuals is important. If the gospel touches the householder, the

possibility for the whole family turning to Christ is higher. The experiences of three couples in the study narrate the same story. When the householder (usually the husband of the house) turns to Christ, then the wife and children usually follow suit and become followers of Christ. Even if the others do not follow suit, the opposition to the missional family is minimal. One couple who works with students shared how they also try to connect to the parents of the students. The husband shared that when the parents come to know about the new Christian faith of their children, they ostracize them from everything. Aghamkar, an urban missiologist, confirms this occurrence: “In India when individuals decide to leave their traditional religion, they are considered traitors. The church must take care to allow the gospel to penetrate through families and kinship webs” (Aghamkar) . Hence, more and more missional families should connect as families to other families rather than just to individuals, which I think would be more rewarding. Children also serve as a natural connecting point; missional families have oriented their children to pray for others’ needs, and they allow their children to visit neighbor’s friends. Such natural connections are the best way forward than forced connections through programs.

Missional families’ method of using every opportunity also reveals their passion for the ones who do not know Christ. Their passion to reach their own relatives, friends, and colleagues is truly a scriptural model, explicitly seen in the life of Cornelius, the model missional family.

**Willingness to sacrifice for others’ needs.** To become followers of Jesus Christ is indeed a costly affair. The missional families sacrificed their time, talent, and treasure. As per the findings, they spend much of their time on people; they share their resources

liberally with others. Visitors who need help take their weekends away. They are even willing to switch jobs and move to part-time assignments for the sake of ministering to others. This phenomenon is also common with all the missional families in the Scripture. No sacrifice is comparable to the first missional family of Godhead. Only because Jesus carried the cross, his disciples are also encouraged to do so. His model of sacrifice remains a supreme example and inspiration to anyone who wants to be missional. In the missional home at Capernaum, traditionally believed to be the house of Peter (Mark 2:1-5), people even removed the roof of the house for Jesus to heal a man. The cost involved for the householder in allowing them to open the roof of the house does not find a mention by Mark when he wrote the Gospel, but the family allowed it to accommodate the healing of a paralytic man. Hence, the willingness to sacrifice is a virtue passed on through the act of incarnation to all who follow the incarnated Jesus. At times, the missional families even had to sacrifice their own children at the altar in different ways, such as leaving the kids in the middle of the night to reach out to families in dire need, or as one couple mentioned to accommodate a drug addict at home, they had at times neglected their own children. However, I should mention the senior couples acknowledged the blessings they have received from God with regard to their children's future. They never considered their sacrifice as a sacrifice, but they saw it as an investment into his kingdom. Therefore, no family can be missional unless they are willing to sacrifice and bear the cost of following Jesus.

**Their witness by life and word.** The strongest method for a missional family to attract people to Christ is by their own lifestyle. India has enough people to give spiritual discourses based on various philosophies, but what attracts people the most is their

lifestyle. Indians still see Christianity as a religion of the West and many feel what they see in Hollywood is the culture of Christians. In India, culture and religion are intermingled, and so they tend to see the culture of nations that have more Christians as the culture of Christians. Therefore, many perceive Christianity as a religion of loose morals, and such notions already affect Christian witness in India. Hence, the need to witness by life is the need of the hour. Stands that one takes in one's workplace against the tide to follow ethical and godly standards, one's behavior and attitude to others, one's concern and love for people, one's attitude toward one's own spouse and children, etc. are so important to being a Christian witness. Others watch and observe every move, which becomes a great tool for attracting others to Christ. Just like the sacred and secular dichotomy, another dichotomy that exists is the divide over witness by life or witness by words. Often I hear people say, "Life should speak louder than words." Though they have a point, when words are not used, I have noticed that the glory that belongs to Jesus goes to that individual who tried to live a life of witness. Therefore, both life and word go hand in hand, and one cannot play down the other. As mentioned in my findings, the missional families along with their lifestyle were ready to speak of their conviction in season and out of season, which became an attractional tool to bring people to Christ.

**Hospitality and generosity.** One of the main characteristics of missional families in the New Testament as described by M. Green was hospitality, to which I have referred in the literature review (208). Carolyn Osiek and David L. Balch say, "Hospitality was crucial in the early church for evangelism and ongoing religious education" (208). After two thousand years, the strategy of these missional families remains the same, which tells me that hospitality and generosity are more of a Christian virtue or characteristic rather



than a method. For participant families hospitality is a natural overflow of their love for others. Christians in the early Church were selling their property and giving to people in need (Acts 2:45-46). They were willing to give up everything for the sake of Christ. I heard similar statements from the participant families, which also shows that their willingness to give and to accommodate others into their homes comes from their vision of eternity. They are able to give because of what God has given them through Christ Jesus. Though all came from economically average homes, their giving was not limited to what they had to spare, but reflected their heart to give. As mentioned in the findings, one of the couples said such hospitality was possible only because the Lord enlarged their hearts. Hence, missional families are givers for the Lord, and their giving is not a reflection on what they have, but it is a reflection of their position in Christ Jesus. The families also shared miracle stories of God's provision when they had given out of their little.

**Effect of motivations on methods used by missional families.** I realized that the motivation of missional families has a direct impact on the methods adopted by missional families. When I looked at all the themes that evolved as motivations, I saw a close link to the methods they chose to reach others. As shared in the analysis, the methods were not limited to what they did but also included what they were that made them attractive families. For all the families interviewed, the main motivation to be a worshipping family came from their own home of origin, and hence every home has made family prayer the hub of all activities. Therefore, their motivation has a direct influence on the methods adopted by the missional families. Similarly, their motivation that comes from their sense of call and burden to reach others makes them use every opportunity to connect with

others. They yield to the promptings of the Spirit of God. Their motivation that comes from their understanding and experience of God keeps them humble because of their gratitude toward God. This attitude results in the families reciprocating their gratitude by showing love and hospitality to others. Their sense of gratitude to God makes them open their home and gives them the impetus to reach out to others in need at every opportunity. Their motivation that comes from their understanding of home as a sacred place keeps the relationship with members of the family in order; it enhances family oneness and openness to one another. It keeps everyone at home accountable to God for their lifestyle as they are conscious of God's presence in their home. Another motivation for the families is their desire to leave a godly legacy. This desire has helped the couple to model a good Christian lifestyle consistent with what they teach and preach at home and to others. Their desire to nurture their children in God's word has engaged the family in nurturing others. Lastly, their motivation to be a blessing to others and to be available for others has made them willingly live a life of sacrifice. Their home is a home of generosity and hospitality, which attracts many to their home.

I was surprised that the methods adopted by missional families of yesteryears and the families of today are much the same, though the use of modern gadgets and technology has additional advantage for the families of this era to keep in quick touch with people. The methods of missional families to reach out to others have little to do with extraordinary strategies, but they have more to do with the family's motivation and desire to be missional, which is similar to the spread of the gospel in the early Church. I did not come across any passage in Scripture that outlines disciples' strategy to reach Jerusalem and then Judea and then the ends of the earth. Instead, I see the disciples led by

the Spirit of God in taking the gospel to the unknown. Though Paul planned and strategized his missionary journey, his desire to make him known and his passion for the lost was his driving force, rather than his methods and strategies. Thus, this research has helped me understand that motivation plays a key role in the methods adopted by missional families.

### **Research Question 3**

The findings of research question 3 show the major challenges that missional families' face, which affect their call to be missional. The challenge common to all, which I suspect is an urban phenomenon, is the challenge of time. Though all would like to be more involved than they have been, they do find time a constraint. Except two families, all of them felt dissatisfied by the level of their engagement in others' lives. They all want to do more for God, but time and their own work-life balance work as a major hindrance. Other challenges include intrusions of others in their private space, few direct interactions with non-Christians by people in ministry, and indoctrination by Hindu fundamentalist groups.

Because of their strong relationship with each other, the couples are able to combat the challenges that these missional families face with regard to intruders. If the missional families had not worked on their own relationships, they would have succumbed to the pressure and would have even lost their ministry. In particular, the couples affected by others who took advantage of their openness have now made strict boundaries by which they are able to guard their own families. With the increase of divorce and extramarital affairs in urban India as shared in the literature review, anyone can fall an easy prey to temptations of adultery if one is not guarded. Hence, the spouses'

openness and communication with each other also can serve as a good guard for their marriage in addition to their strong relationship with God. The challenge of intruders into homes was also a first century phenomena, which Paul addressed in his epistles. Paul defined intruders as the ones who often wear spiritual garments to hide their true selves (2 Tim. 3:6), and they make their way into homes to take advantage of the weak willed. I also find it interesting to note that Paul is listing this behavior of intruders also a sign of the last days. Therefore, every missional family should guard their own interest in keeping their marriage intact before they venture into helping others.

In the same way, younger couples need more time for themselves before they try to accommodate others. Many young couples who want their home to be a blessing for others may entertain others at the cost of their own relationship. One couple who shared how they went overboard on ministry in their first few of years of marriage were feeling highly dissatisfied with each other. Their only child was behaving badly and a school counselor identified the issue. The root problem was the involvement of the parents in various ministries at the cost of their own family. Younger couples need adequate time, especially in the context of arranged marriage in India, to find time to make adjustments in their family life before they reach out to others. As Seamands says, one cannot sacrifice family on the altar of ministry (51).

The challenge of the work-life balance is truly a challenge for demanding careers such as the information technology professionals. However, one of the participant husbands shared how he could let his boss know of his family priority, which was helpful to balance his family and work. Work life balance is an area of struggle also for people in ministry. A busy pastor who was one of the participants had moved out of pastoral

ministry into a mission organization because he felt he had missed his children in their growing-up years and wanted some time with them before their nest becomes empty. The role of many women is interesting as they either chose a career that gave them time with family or chose a part-time career, while some even decided to stay home to make investments in their children and family. As mentioned in the literature review, with more job opportunities and high pay rise to take demanding jobs and miss family is a huge temptation. Thus, missional families have prioritized their family and their mission even before their career, which helps them overcome this challenge of work-life balance.

The challenge to connect with non-Christians for people who are in full-time Christian ministry is one of the main challenges in India for pastors and other Christian leaders. Most Christian ministry in India continues among Christians, and people who have dedicated their life for full-time service of God find the task of connecting to people of other faiths a challenge. A pastor has enough work to take care of his own sheep and often reaching to people of other faiths does not appear as a priority, though many know their responsibility to reach others outside of their fold. Nevertheless, people who are engaged in the marketplace through their vocation are able to connect easily and have many natural acquaintances because of their jobs. Such acquaintances are rare for pastors and people in full-time ministry, except when one is working in a grassroots level missionary. Hence, this barrier or challenge needs intentional efforts by people in full-time ministry to build relationships and rapport with their neighbors. Community engagements, meetings, and public forums are good places to connect, and one could participate with zeal and enthusiasm in order to overcome this barrier. Paul's missional strategy to use influential homes and his connection to other prominent households

spread the gospel faster. Similarly, people in full-time missions should explore ways by which they can connect to families of influence in the cities. Most missions in India are engaged in reaching the poor or the villagers. Nevertheless, in urban India the strategy of reaching the influencers is a strategy one needs to pursue. As the first century Christians engaged themselves in dialogues, debates, and intellectual discourse, Christians in the marketplace today need to equip themselves in order to engage with people in the marketplace. The task of reaching out to people of other faith is indeed turning more costly with the present scenario of growing indoctrination against Christians by Hindu fundamentalism. These forces require prayer and boldness that come from above rather than clever human strategies. The cost of this discipleship is applicable to all missional families. To carry the cross is not an option for any Christian who is a disciple; it is mandatory and the model shown by the early Christians. The first martyr was not an apostle, but a disciple volunteer called Stephen. Similarly, every missional family needs to make bold steps to engage themselves with people of every faith, and one needs to be willing to carry the cross and be willing to lay down one's life for the gospel. These challenges are not new challenges pertaining to this century, but they were also challenges in the first century when Christianity started making impacts in the lives of people. Therefore, except for the challenge of work-life balance, I see the challenges that existed in the early Church continuing to be challenges for missional families even today. This reality also shows that the challenges faced by missional families are not new, but they are challenges caused by the enemy of old. The Scripture reminds his disciples, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the

heavenly realms” (Eph. 6:12). I strongly feel to overcome the barrier one needs to go back to the strategies of the early Church, which are prayer and the armor of God that they used to fight the enemy. However, the encouraging aspect of this study is the passion with which every family is pursuing their call to be a missional family.

### **Additional Findings and Discussions**

When I analyzed I was surprised and to an extent disappointed with certain findings that I noted. As additional findings, I would like to highlight four things: (1) Most of the missional families were reaching more nominal Christians than non-Christians; (2) the majority of the people reached by missional families have been students, teenagers, and youth rather than families and couples; (3) the profession or the location of the house has an influence in helping missional families reach others; and (4) the home was the primary influence of all the missional families and not the church.

Firstly, I realized that most of the families were still reaching out to more nominal Christians than to non-Christians. This aspect was truly disappointing because the church today in India has failed to attract people of other faiths and to some extent even people of Christian faith. Though these families were able to attract many people who would not otherwise go to a church, they were not able to attract as many non-Christians through these homes. I do not have easy solutions, but I suspect that much prayer and a larger degree of incarnation may facilitate reaching people of other faiths. However, I should mention that the missional families do have rapport with non-Christians, and some have come to faith through these families. However, India, being the second largest populated country with almost one-sixth of the world’s population and housing mostly Hindus and

Muslims, I truly desire that every Christian home would take up the challenge of reaching their own neighbors and friends through friendly interaction and evangelism.

Secondly, I found that the majority of the people reached by missional families have been students, teenagers, and youth rather than families and couples. Families and couples need attention in urban India because of the increasing marital discord due to various issues discussed in the previous chapters. Though all the missional families have encountered people with family issues, they focus more on younger individuals rather than married couples. Young people easily disclose their issues, but families do not easily open up their issues to others in India due to the *shame* factor that is associated with it. This reality of missional families not reaching couples could also be because of the inability of missional families to handle family issues. For example, one couple confessed their inability to handle the marital and family problems of others. However, the encouraging factor is that the same person has joined a counseling course conducted by Urban India Ministries because of the interview. I truly wish that families in crisis would go to missional homes as a refuge, and that missional families would intentionally make themselves available for such families in need.

Thirdly, I discovered that the profession or the location of the house has an influence in helping missional families reach others. The families who were staying in apartments had more opportunities to come together with their neighbors than the one staying in a mission compound. However, depending on their place of residence all of them found ways of connecting to others in their own ways. Similarly, the one who worked in secular companies had more non-Christian friends than the ones in full-time ministry. Hence, the ones who served in secular jobs were more incarnational than the



ones who were in full-time ministry because of their opportunity to connect with others. In the same way, the couples in full-time ministry were able to open up their home and attract different people than the ones who worked outside in demanding jobs.

Fourthly, I realized that the home was the primary influence of all the missional families and not the Church. Though some of them have been active in church and other activities of the church, I was quite surprised that they did not mention the church they attended. In spite of some of them being leaders of their church, they mentioned their home rather than their church as their primary influence. However, when prompted a couple of them who have their own church, which meets at home mentioned the influence in a superficial way. The missional motive of the couple had strong influence from their home, and in some cases, they even mentioned the influence of a parachurch organization. As one of the participants shared, she feels the need for missional families has increased even more now because the influence of the Church is waning. This findings suggests to me that even if one is a member of a lively megachurch, or a small home church (I had participants from both categories), the primary influence to be missional comes from one's home. Therefore, the opportunity to influence one's children is the responsibility of the parent, and one should not hand it over as an exclusive responsibility of the church. This mandate is scriptural, and it was a responsibility given for every parent in the Old Testament household code found in Deuteronomy 6:5-8 and in all the New Testament household codes given by Paul in many of his letters, which I have detailed in the Chapter 2 of literature review.

Fifthly, I did not see any significant difference in the motivation or methods used by the senior couples or junior couples as much as I had expected. However, some

difference does exist as their children grow up and leave their home. In the home (2. UE) where their children have left home by marriage, the couple is now more engaged in doing Bible studies for older people, than the younger ones. They also mentioned that they have more time with each other and they engage in studying the Bible more together than when their children were there. I also see their focus has shifted to more adult group and to church activities than their involvement with students. However, the same is not true for the other two senior couples who have their children still living with them. Thus, missional families could get less interactive with youngsters when their own children leave home but would continue to keep their home open to reach out to various people.

Two of the senior couples did mention their struggle with family worship when their children started college or began work. To find a common time for them to come together as a family for family worship was always a challenge as they all left home at different times. The young families have an easier time getting all of them together for family worship. However, because the family laid the foundation of family worship in the children during their growing years, the children continued their personal time with God and they came together as a family whenever it was possible to do so. The family worship continued as a discipline between the couple, though their children could not join them at times. Hence, while comparing the senior and younger couples, the main difference that exists between the two groups of participants were the challenge for the senior couple to have family prayer with grown up children and the lesser interactions with students and youngsters when their own children leave home.

### **Other Surprise Impacts**

This whole project had many impacts both in my home and in the families of the people who assisted me in this project. It really highlighted my inadequacies and gave me many ideas and plans that I could include in my own family life. For example, above all the passion of each of these couples was challenging. Another surprise sprung up when my secretary who transcribed the data shared how she felt edified after listening to these interviews. She was also motivated to join a counseling course to help families in crisis.

Another surprise came when both my colleagues who assisted me expressed similar feedback as my secretary. They were encouraged and edified through this exercise, and one of them evaluated his own family life and passion in the light of people's experience and expressed his desire to be a missional family. The other, who was not married, expressed that he would want his home to be a missional home. The raw data was inspirational to read as they had highlighted what the Lord had done in their lives.

### **Implications of the Findings**

The study of missional families in the city of Bangalore has many implications for ministry in urban India.

Firstly, ministry needs to be a mandate of every Christian. Exploration of many ministry patterns and programs to reach India or Indian cities have taken place, but seldom any discussions to use one's own home as a platform to reach the world have occurred as a mission strategy. Officially, India's Christian population remains less than 3 percent of the total population. This reality, I believe is because every Christian does not see ministry as a mandate for every individual but sees ministry as a mandate of a few

“mission professionals.” Many people consider mission as something that is only for missionaries or pastors rather than for every disciple of Christ. I guess reaching India is easier, if every Christian family can take up the challenge to be an influence in their own street, to be a lighthouse couple giving light and hope for many people in their own locality. In the early Church, ministry was not left to just the apostles. The book of Acts records stories of how ordinary men and women from all professions came together to spread the gospel. If every Christian lives a Christian life and takes the challenge of reaching one’s own families and others, I believe Christians can reach India faster. Therefore, the challenge that lies ahead for every church is to empower every member of one’s own church to be missional. I guess ministry cannot be limited to what a local church does, but ministry engagement is a calling for all. This calling is not just what everyone does but who he or she is also matters. Therefore, I feel a reorientation in the way the Church perceives mission by church leadership needs to happen. I wish the Church could empower all the laity of the church to take up their responsibility to reach others for Christ seriously. I guess this attempt would help to reach the world at a faster pace.

Secondly, I recommend that every church take family ministry seriously. Before one reaches out to others, one needs to organize their own house. When one’s own home is in deep trouble, families may have difficulty to engage in mission. I think every church should take ministry to their families seriously because I believe a church that ignores family ignores moral matters. No other institution is better equipped to address moral issues than the Church. When the families strengthen their own family, then they are ready to venture out to meet others. Hence, to work out a systematic and programmatic

schedule in every church to strengthen every single-family unit is important. Every Church can introduce family seminars, camps, small group meetings, and other intergenerational activities. Pastors can use the pulpit effectively to communicate the need for family oneness and unity and other issues that confront family. The church can make counseling help available to hurting families. A team of people can be specialized in the area of family ministry to combat the issues within one's church to strengthen the church's foundation. One recommendation for a programmatic schedule is to have a focused fellowship for families in churches, just like other institutions such as Sunday school or youth fellowship. This initiative for families is lacking in Indian churches today. Urban India Ministries, the organization that has pioneered family ministry in India, has now produced a resource to strengthen families called Church Couples Fellowship (CCF) with an aim of initiating family fellowships in all churches.

Thirdly, the church needs to transfer the role of nurturing children to their parents rather than taking the onus on itself. Missional families have taken the job of nurturing their own children seriously. The church needs to transfer the responsibility of nurturing and discipling of children to their parents rather than taking on the onus of spiritually nurturing children. The church can be instead engaged in empowering parents to nurture their children. Many parents ignore their spiritual responsibility of nurturing their children, and they are often satisfied with the Sunday school input the children receive every Sunday from their church. The Church taking up the onus of spiritual nurture for children is not biblical, and the mandate is given to the parents by God to be primary influencers on their children (Deut. 6:4-8), though the local church can complement it.

Fourthly, family worship needs emphasis as a foundational aspect for every Christian home by pastors and leaders. I realized that family worship is the foundation on which the missional families have based all their activities. In many homes, the family altar is broken. As a person who works with families, I see this sad plight of many Christian homes. Today many have ignored family worship in their own homes due to their work and busy schedule, including full-time ministers. Every church and every institution concerned about building a strong family have to emphasize the need for family worship, and if every Christian family can be a worshipping family, then I believe that their family altar will alter their family life and will strengthen their own homes.

Fifthly, families could adopt migrant students who have come into the city. All missional families I interviewed engage with young people, as Bangalore is the centre for many migrant students from other states of India. Many migrant students from other states come for educational needs and many end up settling down there too. Though I had expressed my disappointment over missional families only targeting young people or students, I do appreciate the missional families opening up their homes to these students who may have gone astray if they had not met up with these families. Many young people go astray and are lost without any support system. If every Christian home can become a refuge to the migrant students of Bangalore, by making them feel at home or if every church families take up (or even spiritually adopt) a couple of students in their homes, they can impact many generations. Usually Christian students end up bringing up non-Christian students and the missional homes becomes landmark for many of these students. The model set by missional families can be modeled by other church families

and can be started within one's own church as many migrant young people visit churches, often returning without getting noticed by anyone.

Sixthly, all ministries need to base their ministry on genuine love for others. I think Christians need to love people genuinely without any agenda. Jesus loved the rich young man even when though the young man went back disappointed with Jesus. Every missional family genuinely loves people. Their love for people motivates them to pray for their own family, friends, neighbors and colleagues. Their love makes them sacrifice, adjust to all inconvenience, and travel the extra mile for the gospel.

Seventhly, I feel ministers need to know that mission is not just clever strategies or methods, but it is being sensitive to God's voice and following his direction in order to accomplish his purpose. Mission is the work of the Spirit of God, and the need is to be more sensitive to God's voice than human strategies. One of the regrets of an elderly couple was the haste with which he shared the gospel, leading to loss of opportunity to share further. No efforts will bear fruit unless one soaks in prayer. I discussed how methods and strategies of the missional families have its link to their worship. One cannot ignore praying for neighbors and friends if one needs to see any results. As one interviewee mentioned, when they started praying for people, they saw others knocking at their door. All the missional families pray for the ones whom they are reaching. After many years, they may see some fruit, but they have prayed consistently for the same. Thus, often one's passion for God and being sensitive to God's voice leads the family more than any forced methods.

Eighthly, I sense an urgent need to link the two institutions called family and church. Since the church is a family of families, if every missional church empowered

each family to be missional, the church would become missional too. For missional families to see their home as a missional base is an important concept that the church can teach Christian families. In an individualistic culture where people only focus on just one's own need, the missional families interviewed have a longing to be available for others. They are not full-time ministers, but they share the heart of God for the world through whichever profession in which they engage. When the church begins to view the home as a mission base, the church can do many outreach ministries through every home in their church. This perspective will also foster church growth. However, I would not recommend that every home start a house church unless mature leaders who can constantly disciple, teach, and nurture people in Christ are available. Moreover, they need to connect to other believers and other churches, or else they could fragment into small units with no relationship to each other and could further divide the body of Christ. Nevertheless, for people from other faiths who cannot publicly declare their faith immediately after their conversion due to various pressures, these home churches can be a place to foster and disciple them in their faith. If the church empowers every family to be missional, then the church automatically becomes a missional church.

Ninthly, I feel a need to teach Christian families about specifically guarding their own family even as they passionately reach out to others. The regret stories of some families with regard to neglecting their children, or the intruders who are insensitive to people's needs and private space or the counselees who cause turbulence in the marriage relationship of the missional couples, serve as a warning or as a danger signal. I wish the couple who felt they went overboard in ministry neglecting their child knew how to lay boundaries in their lives even before they set out for ministry. Therefore, couples who



desire their homes to be a blessing to others need to learn to say *No* to guard their own homes. Mission organization such as Urban India Ministries and other churches that focus on missional families need to add this important part of teaching to guard one's own family in their curriculum.

### **Limitations of the Study**

I had to face many limitations while reviewing the findings of this research. The first limitation is in relation to the number of samples I chose. As this study was only a sample of seven families who well matched the five criteria of missional families, I am not sure if the seven samples could adequately cover all the motives, methods, and challenges of a missional family, though they were a good mix of age, professions, family backgrounds, and denominations. When I realized that many were reaching more Christians than non-Christians, I wondered if families that only focused on non-Christian families were there. The fivefold criteria of missional families that I used to choose my samples also became an obstacle for many to qualify for the interview. Some were strong in one criterion but weak in another. Some of them could have had some effective methods in reaching others, which I could not study, as they did not qualify on the grounds of not fulfilling all the criteria of missional family.

The second limitation has to do with geographical location as the families picked were only from the city of Bangalore. Though the research can apply to similar cities in India, I am not sure how the study could be relevant to rural India. The issues that families face in rural India are different, and I see this study applying more to urban Indian families than rural Indian families.

The third limitation is inherent to all qualitative research—reliability and validity. In spite of all my best attempts to be objective in this study as mentioned in the research methodology of Chapter 3, since I am engaged in teaching about missional families and also a striving practitioner myself, my own personal bias and preconceived thoughts may have affected the instrument used. However, I had taken maximum care to control the issues related to reliability and validity by proper formulation of research questions approved by experts in the field, by further adjusting my instrument through a pilot study, by maintaining field notes, by involving external people to code the data, and by using a literature review to confirm my feelings and findings. Few surprises that came from the findings also confirmed that the instrument I used was effective enough to provide the answers for the research questions.

### **Suggestions for Further Study**

Many possibilities I could see for further study. A comparative study with missional families and other families who do not qualify to be missional would help to understand the key difference between the two kinds of families in their background, spiritual heritage, family dynamics, the place of worship, etc.

Conducting a similar study is possible with people from rural India, and one could explore the difference between the urban and rural missional families. They have a more laid-back lifestyle than the hurried lifestyle of the city, and their place of residence is different from the city. This difference needs exploration through another study. The rural folks generally have a traditional understanding of family life, and for many of them their work defines the roles of husband and wife. Hence, to see the challenges for families in rural areas to be missional would be different and interesting.

Another possible study is to study the effect of church background on one's desire to become missional. Since I had people from various church backgrounds, I am a bit confused if church background had any effect on their desire to be missional. Often some see certain churches as lively while others seem dead or lifeless, but of the couples I interviewed, I had couple from a Pentecostal background and another from a traditional Syrian church background. To see if any kind of church in particular is able to affect more people to be missional families is a study to explore.

Another interesting study would be to study the role of husband and wife in making the home missional. Who truly makes the difference? What role should each partner play to balance family and ministry? In this study, women had a good role to play in sacrificing their career and spending time with children, but is that the right choice? What kind of sacrifices can the men make?

Another interesting study could be of the children of missional families. Missionary children go through their own struggles, and similarly I believe children growing up in missional homes could also go through their own struggles, which they may not confess openly. However, from the children's perspective, how do they understand their homes being missional? Do they enjoy people always being at their home? Are they disturbed? An exploration in that would help understand their struggles and their blessings, too.

### **Summary**

This study was an exploratory study on missional families, which threw light onto how ordinary people can take the mission of God in this world using their own homes. This study helped me to see that irrespective of one's profession one can serve God full

time in his or her office or home by living according to God's plan. A few professionals called full-time ministers cannot accomplish reach India's 1.2 billion people , but every Christian family can make Christ known to others by being a missional family in the place where God has planted them. With a growing need for help among Indian families, families that radiate the love of Jesus by their life and words are the need of the hour. Methods are good, but the right motivation with the leading of God's Spirit that would help to achieve the purpose of God in India. The missional families in India have too many opportunities and mission is not only for a few professionals. Every Christian in India needs to take seriously their call to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. With growing hostility and persecution for any organized work of the church in India, I see missional families as the need of the hour.

## APPENDIX A

### QUESTIONNAIRE TO FAMILIES SUGGESTED BY LEADERS

Name: (optional or use initials) .....

Name of Spouse: (optional or use initial) .....

Number of years married: ..... No. of years as resident in Bangalore:.....

No. of children and ages: .....

#### **Structured closed-ended questions:**

1. How regular is your family worship?

☐ seldom ☐ most often ☐ everyday ☐ only when it is convenient

2. How often do you pray together as a couple?

☐ seldom ☐ most often ☐ everyday ☐ only when it is convenient

3. Do all participate in the family worship including children? Yes / No

If yes, do they all participate regularly?

☐ seldom ☐ most often ☐ everyday ☐ only when it is convenient

4. On a scale of 0 to 10 (with 0 as terrible and 10 as excellent), how would you rate your family worship experience?

0 \_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_ 4 \_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_ 6 \_\_\_\_ 7 \_\_\_\_ 8 \_\_\_\_ 9 \_\_\_\_ 10

5. How often do you go out as a family?

☐ seldom ☐ most often ☐ everyday ☐ only when it is convenient

6. Do you have a regular time set apart in your weekly/monthly schedule to be together as a family? Yes ☐ No ☐

7. On a scale of 0 to 10, how would rate how your children enjoy coming back home after school/university/work? (Rate 0 as totally dislike and 10 as excited to come home.)

0 \_\_\_1\_\_\_2\_\_\_3\_\_\_4\_\_\_5\_\_\_6\_\_\_7\_\_\_8\_\_\_9\_\_\_10

8. Have all your children (if older than 10) come to a personal faith in Jesus?

☐ Yes      ☐ No      ☐ I'm not sure

If No, what do you think is keeping them from making a decision for Christ?

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9. As a couple how satisfied are you about the quality time you spend with each other every day?

☐ totally dissatisfied ☐ partly satisfied ☐ satisfied ☐ very satisfied

10. How often do you relate to your neighbors/relatives and friends?

☐ seldom ☐ most often ☐ everyday ☐ only when it is convenient

11. What are the main occasions that you connect with your neighbors? (through your home)

☐ festivals ☐ family occasions ☐ for some help ☐ all occasions ☐ on no occasion

12. Have your neighbor approached you for any help? What kind?

☐ for emotional needs ☐ for material needs ☐ for community crisis ☐ any other

13. How often do your neighbors/friends/relatives visit your home?

☐ regularly ☐ only for specific needs ☐ at least once a month ☐ rarely ☐ never

14. How do you see the urgency of sharing the gospel with any of your neighbor/friends from other faiths?

☐ very urgent ☐ not so urgent ☐ wait for occasions ☐ wait for God to lead

15. In your personal or family prayer, how often do you pray for the families in your neighborhood or the world beyond your home ?

☐ daily ☐ once a week ☐ rarely ☐ if there is a need ☐ never

16. How often do people approach your home for their personal problems?

☐ very often ☐ sometimes ☐ rarely ☐ hardly

17. Do you have any regular prayer meetings in your home with members outside of your family?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, how often do you meet?

once a month ☐ twice a month ☐ thrice a month ☐ weekly ☐ other

18. What kind of people attend the prayer meeting?

☐ adult women ☐ adult men ☐ mixed group ☐ youth and teens ☐ kids ☐ other

19. What faith background are the attendees?

☐ Christians only ☐ some Hindus but mostly Christians ☐ all faiths but mostly

Christians ☐ largely other faiths and less Christians ☐ other

20. How many approximately have been discipled by you through your home?

☐ more than 50 people ☐ more than 25 but less than 50

☐ more than 15 but less than 25 ☐ less than 15 ☐ hardly anyone

21. Can you tick any one word that would best describe your home from the list below?

☐ open home ☐ mission center ☐ prayer tower ☐ safe haven ☐ other

**Optional Question:**

22. Do you have a family mission statement? Yes / No

If yes, can you write down your statement? If No, but if you wish to articulate a statement you could so!

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## APPENDIX B

### MINI TELEPHONE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

#### FOR SELECTED PARTICIPANTS

##### Open-ended structured questions

(To be answered by either member of the couple in the presence of the other)

1. WORSHIPPING FAMILY:

- How do you think your family worship has influenced every member of your family?

2. LOVING FAMILY:

- What word best describes the relationship among family members?

3. INCARNATIONAL FAMILY:

- How many close friends do you have from other faiths?

4. ATTRACTIONAL FAMILY:

- How often do your neighbors visit your home? Do they enjoy it?

5. NURTURING FAMILY:

- How is your home used for discipling or nurturing people in Christian faith?

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## **APPENDIX C**

### **SEMI-STRUCTURED OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS**

#### **INTERVIEW 1**

Name : ..... Name of Spouse: .....

No. of years married ..... No. of years as resident in Bangalore.....

No. of children and ages .....

#### **Focused Life History of Couples**

(Questions asked individually to both husband and wife to answer individually.)

##### **WORSHIPPING FAMILY:**

1. How has family worship become an integral part of your family life?
2. How disciplined is your family worship?
3. How did you achieve that discipline?
4. What would you consider as the motivation for your family worship?
5. How was the pattern of family worship in your home of origin?
6. How is the pattern different from your pattern followed at home?

##### **LOVING FAMILY:**

1. How did you foster such good relationship with your immediate family members?
2. Can you narrate how you have grown in your love for each other as a couple?
3. What would you say is the secret of your married life?
4. How do you handle conflicts that come your way between each other?
5. How was the relationship between your parents?
6. How was your parents' relationship with you as you grew up?
7. How did you cultivate close relationships with your children?
8. What is your motivation to be a loving family?

INCARNATIONAL FAMILY:

1. How is your relationship with your relatives (or extended family?)
2. How intentional have you been in developing strong bonds between them?
3. How much were you able to share Christ through these relationships? What is your response to your own relatives who do not know the Lord?
4. How is your relationship with friends and families of other faiths?
5. How have you intentionally connected to people outside your home?
6. How often are you called to intervene when people go through various crisis? How do you respond to those calls?
7. How much have you seen your parents being available for others outside your home?

ATTRACTIONAL FAMILY:

1. How often do you have people visiting your home? Why do they visit?
2. What motivated you to keep your home open?
3. How has your openness affected your own privacy? How do you balance privacy and openness?
4. How do your children adjust with regular visitors and friends? How much do they like it?
5. Can you share how your home used to be when you were growing up?

NURTURING FAMILY:

1. How are you involved in nurturing people through your home?
2. Who are the people being nurtured?
3. How does nurturing of your children take place?
4. What kind of nurturing did you receive when you were growing up?
5. What kind of pattern do you follow in nurturing people?

## **APPENDIX D**

### **SEMI-STRUCTURED OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS**

#### **INTERVIEW 2**

##### **The Details of Experience**

Questions asked together to the couple. If couples had two individual perspectives, then I recorded individual answers.

##### **WORSHIPPING FAMILY:**

1. Can you share specifically about how you conduct the family worship experience?
  - a. timing b. duration c. involvement of each of them d. pattern
2. What are some of the methods you adopt to keep the family worship meaningful and creative to all?
3. Can you share any interesting aspects or experience of your family worship that you consider significant?
4. What are some of the struggles or challenges that you have faced to worship the Lord as a family?

##### **LOVING FAMILY:**

1. Can you share experiences that you think have strengthened your relationship with one another as a couple?
2. Can you share any experiences with your children that helped in developing deeper bonds with them?
3. Has any experience you would like to share really strengthened family unity?
4. Do you have any experience you regret in handling family relationships and what was the lesson learnt?

## INCARNATIONAL FAMILY

Can you share about any attempts you had made to connect with your extended family members intentionally to share the gospel? (Both successful and unsuccessful )

1. Can you narrate some incidents of reaching people outside your home with the love of Christ? (By word and deed)
2. In relating to your neighbors and friends what are some of the barriers and challenges that you have faced to share the gospel? Any incidents that you could share?

## ATTRACTIONAL FAMILY:

1. Can you share how you are able to attract people to your home? Could you narrate a few examples and your methods?
2. Can you share any difficulties that you have faced in keeping your home open?

## NURTURING FAMILY:

1. Can you narrate what specific methods and tools you use to nurture others?
2. Can you share any incident of people accepting Christ through your home?
3. What are some of the challenges that you have faced in mentoring and nurturing people?

## GENERAL QUESTIONS TO BEING A MISSIONAL FAMILY:

- a. Do you have any family traditions you have been following from your home that you think are a good traditions for others to follow. If so, please share.
- b. Would you consider your home a mission center? If so, can you share your dreams and aspirations in using your home more effectively as a mission center?

- c. What are some of the others factors (other than what has been mentioned above) that have played a major role to facilitate your desire to be missional including the location of your house, your children, friends etc?

## **APPENDIX E**

### **SEMI-STRUCTURED OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS**

#### **INTERVIEW 3**

##### **Reflection on the Meaning**

(Questions asked individually to the couple to answer individually.)

##### **WORSHIPPING FAMILY:**

1. What is the real purpose of your family worship?
2. What does it mean to be a family “that prays together”?
3. How has your family worship affected your personal life and family life?
4. How do you think that your family worship will influence your kid’s future?

##### **LOVING FAMILY:**

1. What does it mean to have a strong family relationship? How is your family different from others?
2. From your backgrounds, how much do you think your parent’s family life has an influence on your family?
3. What will your kids carry into their family life because of your relationship with each other and your spouse?
4. If there are any corrections that you would like to make in your family relationships what would they be?

##### **INCARNATIONAL:**

1. Reflecting on your experience in reaching out to families, neighbors, and friends, how would you rate the effectiveness of your methods?
2. In the context of growing divorce and family break-ups how do you think your family can be a catalyst in reaching out those in need?
3. Are you presently engaged in reaching families as much as you desire? If No, what are the hindrances?
4. In the context of growing hostility toward Christians, how receptive do you think your neighbors are to listen to the gospel? How do you overcome their hostility?

ATTRACTIONAL FAMILY:

1. Why do you keep your home as an open home?
2. Are you satisfied with the way you have engaged in sharing Christ to others?
3. What truly makes a home attractional? What would you suggest for any family to keep their home attractional?

NURTURING FAMILY:

1. Why are you engaged in nurturing people through your home? What does it mean to you?
2. How important is it for you to nurture your own kids more than others?

GENERAL:

1. In what way do you think Christian homes can become a platform for God's mission in India?



**APPENDIX F**  
**INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

Project Title: A Study of Missional Families in the City of Bangalore, India.

Investigator: P. C. Mathew Thankachan, National Director, Urban India Ministries,  
Bangalore. [www.urbanindia.org](http://www.urbanindia.org) email: [pc.mathew@asburyseminary.edu](mailto:pc.mathew@asburyseminary.edu) ph: 91-80-2529  
2443

You are being asked to participate in a dissertation research project conducted through Asbury Theological Seminary. The institution requires that you give your signed agreement to participate in this project.

The investigator will explain to you in detail the purpose of the project, the procedures to be used, and the potential benefits and possible risks of participation. You may ask him any questions you have to help you understand the project. A basic explanation of the project is written below. Please read this explanation and discuss with the researcher any questions you may have.

If you then decide to participate in the project, please sign on the last page of this form in the presence of the investigator who explained the project to you. You should be given a copy of this form to keep.

1. Nature and Purpose of the Project:

The purpose of this research is to explore how Christian families can be intentional in using their home to fulfill the missional purpose of God. The study will explore opportunities and challenges faced by Christian families who are already engaged in missional activities by both lifestyle and works in the city of Bangalore. These findings will help in understanding how effectively Christian couples could use their homes as

mission centers primarily to reach people in their felt needs and also as a point for evangelism.

2. Explanation of Procedures:

At this time, you have to complete a brief questionnaire, which will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to answer. Then you may be invited to participate in a brief phone interview and you may be invited to participate in a longer conversation related to the study with a maximum of three interviews of maximum 90 minutes each.

3. Discomforts and Risks:

While I anticipate that few discomforts and risks are present in this study, some individuals may experience uneasiness when asked specific questions related to family relationships between the couple, children, etc. Or some may experience emotional distress as they think back to a specific time or incident in their life that is unpleasant, especially in the context of their relationship with people outside their immediate family.

4. Benefits:

Participating in the interview can bring back precious memories of how God has led you as a family in your pursuit to fulfill his purpose. You could feel a sense of satisfaction to see how God used you as a family to bring healing and hope to so many people around you.

In addition, results from this study will help many families to adopt similar strategies to be a blessing to others around them. More specifically, this research will help guide missiologists in India and other countries to look at mission strategies by using the home as a mission center.

5. Confidentiality:

The interviews and other details disclosed to the researcher will be kept confidential. Your name and other identifying information are protected. Your family will be referred to by code numbers and the names of the couples will not be disclosed in the research.

6. Refusal/Withdrawal:

Anyone who agrees to participate in this study is free to withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty.

*You understand also that it is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, and you believe that reasonable safeguards have been taken to minimize both the known and potential but unknown risks.*

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Signature of Participant

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Date

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Witness

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Date

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